

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

A Female Teacher Voice in a Symbolic Order:

A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University**

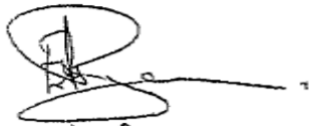
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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized capital 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Date:

30th May, 2013

Dedication

To my wonderful sons, David and Sam

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Abstract

My thesis inquires into the role of education in the creation of “woman” in a gendered society. Through dramatic and poetic presentations of lived experiences of females in schools and outside of schools, I seek to profile a society which appears to be ordered in a prescribed manner—a Symbolic Order. In an age when women still command lower pay, fewer positions of power and a lower socio-political status than do men, I question how a female educator might impact upon young women in a Tasmanian public high school.

I begin to understand a world of Slavoj Zizek whose passion and curiosity contribute to my thoughts of a Symbolic Order as I inquire into our human attempts to enter and become incorporated into the Order. I wonder at society’s use of language which brings a Self into being. Using understandings of the Real, a time before becoming “woman” or “girl”, I explore educational and social processes that bring a female into being “woman”.

I explore the power of a woman’s voice and wonder at its decline in power as society builds barriers surrounding her gender. I inquire into the ways by which girls learn to use their voice, and how they seem to be haunted by the question suggested by Zizek when he asks, “*Chez Vuoi?* What do you want of me?”

This question constantly is called as girls seek to find how they might become “woman”. Using language, the Symbolic Order provides possible answers. I use my

lived experiences as an educator and as a woman as I search for meaning in the historicity of my life, as I exist in the Symbolic Order.

I intend to provoke as I inquire—I wish to create an unease as others look to my understandings of a society where to be human is to be “man”. I offer no answers. I open my hands inviting comment and insight from others who might question and expand upon my thoughts as they seek to lead minds into other directions.

I use drama to write of lived experience and I look to the voices of those within my worlds to make their sounds known to others who come to understand the manifolds of being of others within life worlds.

Introduction: It Begins like a Ripple

When we shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, we raise the question of being, because we begin to look at things precisely as they are given to us, precisely as they are manifested, precisely as they are determined by "form," which is the principle of disclosure in things. We begin to look at things in their truth and evidencing. This is to look at them in their being. We also begin to look at the Self as the dative of manifestation. This is to look at it in its being, because the core of its being is to inquire into the being of things. "Being" is not just thing-like; being involves disclosure or truth, and phenomenology looks at being primarily under its rubric of being truthful. It looks at "human" being as a place in the world where truth occurs.
Robert Sokolowski

My story starts. I ponder and consider what my being is to this world, what it is within the world and what my being is to others. I hesitate to claim that there could be a thesis in that. It is the beginning. I think no further than instances, observations, situations, emotions and images. At times, I think with anger then subside into calm while I piece together images that taunt and haunt me. I look around, knowing that it is all from my eyes and that I cannot see anything through another's eyes—it is me and my thoughts with which I begin.

I began to think about my idea for my thesis. What incites thought and provokes a need to understand? What actually irks me? What embraces my life coils inside my work and my Self? Are there things that make me angry? Are there things that please me? What do I passionately need to know?

Are these the questions that form the basis of study? Maybe they are. Perhaps the core of this learning might revolve around something that I see happening and need to be able to change, even if in my own world.

I believe that a thesis is to be based upon something that directly concerns a person. I guess then that the immediate thought is that I take a look at work, employment, conditions and people around me. What is happening there? Is it a chance for change or could it be an opportunity to delve into truth?

I had finally returned to education and teaching in the public system after many years doing varying types of work but basically involving education in some form. I returned to Tasmania after twenty years in Queensland. I returned to full-time teaching in the Tasmanian system after being out of it since 1978. There had been short stints as a relief teacher in Queensland schools but there was nothing where I was actually involved in the students' lives.

So I find myself in a small town high school, firstly, then in a larger one. The first town has many students from rural backgrounds while the second is larger and has a higher number of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

It doesn't matter which school I talk about, as the society is similar—Tasmanian, lower socio-economic background and considered to be one of the most disadvantaged places in Australia by some.

I am engaged in a school and when a teacher becomes part of a school, the social activities of the students become more apparent. As a teacher one is sometimes privy to gossip and innuendo; and to open discussion of extra-curricular activities. It is a privileged position and one that should never be taken lightly. I watch, I see and I hear.

I find that my observations of girls in public schools in Tasmania cause me to feel uneasy. Something isn't quite right in the way that I see intelligent girls accepting negative male behaviours as normal. Something isn't right when I hear girls' breasts being loudly discussed in class—there is even an episode where the talk turns into a grope. The girl stands, embarrassed and shamed. No, there is something else happening here. This seems like something out of the seventies, when girls were only beginning to see some light in the tunnel of patriarchy. After one particularly intense end of year party, I am informed of the activities of the brightest girl in the year group. She has felled most of the young men in her year group in one night. The most difficult part is that the young men are boastful and arrogant in their comments to the others; she is ashamed—she is one and they were many. Then I open my ears to the other activities that are common and accepted.

This is like stepping back into the primitive social times when girls were fair game and passive enough to just accept denigration. Maybe I have stepped into a time warp!

No, I am definitely in a public high school in the 2000's, in Tasmania.

I am not just bewildered. I am horrified, disgusted, sad and angry. How can this be happening? How can we be in the 21st century and be treating one part of humanity with no dignity and no respect? What on earth is happening when boys feel that this is an acceptable way to be—valid male behaviours? How can the girls be so intimidated that they feel flattered to be treated like this?

I take it on. I know what I will do. I know what my thesis will entail but being brave enough to articulate this is another matter.

In an education world, where money is being poured into the education of boys; where fully funded scholarships are being given to people who wish to study the problems for boys in schools; where a Federal Government pours nineteen million dollars into special lighthouse schools that will focus on boys' education is where I need to start looking. How many boys' initiatives are there? I begin to look. I see that in 2002, the House of Representatives conducted an inquiry into the education of boys in Australia and thus are born the wonderful new programmes that will help to educate boys. There is the *Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme* in 2003-2005 in which over five hundred schools received funding to improve boys' educational outcomes. *Success for Boys* was the next one with over nineteen million dollars attached to it. In 2007, there was a large conference on *Building Fine Men* in Newcastle (DEEWR).

So much money is being handed out and I see the denigration and humiliation of girls every day, in all kinds of ways. I remember listening in staffrooms to teachers talking about girls and discussing their "status". The girls are receiving affirmation or rejection depending upon how "sluttish" they are. I am horrified and cannot believe this. Even from adults, boys are receiving praise for their misogyny. How entrenched this must be! I ask a few people what they see happening in schools—how it is for girls.

How surprised I was by the responses!

One young 26-year-old man said, "Girls are doing really well now. You won't have anything to write about."

Another said, "It has gone so far the other way. Everybody is so worried about upsetting the girls that the boys are really left out and that isn't fair."

A senior education manager said, "Girls are much more successful than boys. The boys

are really underperforming in every sense of the word. Here, read this book on

Big Picture Education. That will help boys to be better."

Can I really take this statement as fact? Is this the truth? I know it isn't and I wonder just how disengaged people are from a girl's situation. I do feel that Media has pushed this—women have had it too good for too long. It is about time the boys were given a fair go.

I am amazed and confused. What do they mean that girls have everything and are really successful? We live in a patriarchal world where males govern politically, economically and socially. I fail to see the invisible women in these systems. If the people's observations are correct, and girls are doing so well, why do we have escalating violence towards women, increased sexualisation of girls and few women leaders in politics and economics? Why do we have starving, emaciated bodies held up as the ideal of womanhood? Why are women still earning less than men? Why are there so many women in poverty? Why are teenaged girls getting pregnant and dropping out of school? Why are women accepting debasement by the Media? Equality? I ask myself the question of where the equality might be. Why do I perceive this situation? If, as so many people say, boys are missing out, does this mean that I am blind or simply single-minded and biased.

It is the emotions that invade my life and me. My strongest emotion is fear, fear for my Self, fear of the fact that I will be labelled a "feminist". Being a feminist conjures images of very large masculine women, hating men and denigrating everything masculine while loudly proclaiming the joys of being female to the exclusion of anything else. Why would I even imagine that? The Media has done a good job of firing the arrows of fear into my mind, as there is nothing more

unfeminine than to be a feminist. It takes enormous strength to actually admit, firstly to myself and then to others that I am going to write as a woman; I am going to include feminist philosophy and female philosophers; I do have a deep interest in the impact of feminism on girls of the 21st century. However, I want to begin my writing as a human being, not as a gender. I am so guarded by what could be done to me if I do speak out. I don't mean in an overt way but in ways that will diminish and damage silently.

Fear is a primal emotion—I have fear of isolation; fear of being sexually stigmatised as lesbian, fear of denigration and ridicule. I gather about me a cloak of fear that my writing will be negated and relegated to the piles of “silly” feminist literature that fill recycling areas and are laughed about in gatherings where there are men. How strong is that sentiment and how good a weapon is that emotion for ensuring that “feminist” thought does not get out of hand, does not become rampant and does not flourish in a society where it might threaten to destabilise the status quo. Restrictive bonds bind a mind that wants to understand and know why. Strong chains of society seek to restrict minds and erect invisible bars that keep feminist thought in a disparaged and irrelevant view. I learn that feminism is for the sexually inadequate and the unbeautiful.

I do not realise how strong is my need for acceptance as a female. I have no idea that I can be so easily driven into conformity and held in my corner. The silencing of women is enforced unswervingly.

If I am called upon to speak of feminism, I might speak of respect and humanity; I might speak of rights that all human beings have, regardless of gender; I might speak of dignity and emancipation, empowerment and love.

Is feminism threatening to any person? This feminism is attenuating to women as human beings as are men. It is a cry for this fact to be repaired in all political, social, religious, economic, legal and individual lives. It is a cry for women to be removed from the status of Other and to realise the freedoms of men.

I do not want to be silenced, made irrelevant and ignored. I do not wish to have these stories of teacher and girls made trifling and trivialised. The stories are real and the situations are real. My conscience will not be hushed.

I listen to the narratives of girls and I wonder about them, consider them, unravel them and ponder over possibilities and notions for teachers and girls in an education system in the 21st century.

When the Media denies the existence of misogyny and sexism, is it any wonder that the girls I teach are targets of denigration and humiliation, and there has been no support? They might be whiners or, worse still, they are feminists.

It happens to a Prime Minister and is accepted by all men and by society so I ask you, my reader, what might be happening for women and girls throughout Australia when we are told that it is acceptable to be sexist in Australia?

To lead even further, I find that there is a lack of understanding about the mechanisms by which education socialises human beings into becoming accepting of the status quo and a society which is marked by hierarchy and governed by male ways of being. When discussing issues such as single sex schooling, I hear people saying,

“ Oh no, girls should learn how to be in the real world and they should be at school with boys.”

It is a fragile time for me as I write, as it is time to confront many things in my life and in the lives of others. I would like to place them in perspective and to see how they might influence ways of being for me and for others. It is time to develop a deeper understanding of how things are, how things have been and changes that are possible.

I know that a socialised me cannot be impervious to these effects and I wonder what I might bring to girls I teach. Is it possible that there is a close similarity between my experiences of education and those of girls of today? What part am I playing?

Chapter 1: *Che Vuoi?* What Do You Want of Me?

Lived experience is a starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. Max van Manen

My compelling language states that I am writing of the Symbolic Order and lived experience. Both are primary to exploring how it is to be a female teacher. I begin with lived experience (van Manen, 1990) and what this notion might mean for me. The signifying word “lived” is alive with possibilities. It leads my mind into that which happens to a live person; it creates an idea of that which did happen, by the signification of the past tense. It is not a “living” experience as that would be what is happening now, and by the mere fact that my world is a temporal thing, the event immediately becomes a thing of the past unless I can scribe quickly. I do not mention at this stage, of ascribing meaning to this “lived” experience. As it is not “living”, when the immediacy of the event would require impossible complexity of awareness, perception and language, I have a sound luxury of leaning back and considering what this “lived” might mean. Should I try to contemplate an immediate moment of life, I understand immediately that it is not possible, as a moment has passed, as has that moment—it is assigned to a past tense. Thus I am transforming a lived experience into a text of disclosure of wholeness, a holistic experience that is at once singular

but composed of a whole series of moments. In each of these moments lurks a signifier that is a guide and a pointing finger, which leads into another moment. Yet, while seeking to understand lived experience, I am constantly perplexed by some ideas I hear of and I play with new words or concepts in a way that is very freeing. I use irony as a means of distancing myself from some language. Clair Colebrook, in her book *Irony and the Work of Philosophy*, speaks of an ironist as one who plays with words as though language were a game but she also understands that the game's rules are not immutable so she does not become caught in the force of concepts. She talks of irony as a means by which we might exploit the lack of meaning in a concept or a word through our own games with language (2002, p. 5).

The Imperative to Understand

Robert Sokolowski is highly influential in the development of my understanding of phenomenology and he is one of the authors to whom I look to gain insight and wisdom. In his books, *Introduction to Phenomenology* and *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, Sokolowski begins to present to me portions of the whole of phenomenology, a study of lived experience and understandings of human beings. It does not lie in a single state of temporality—that makes reference to moments—but it lies within three structures that I use as I weave my text of lived experience. He talks of a whole composed of parts—of people and things, of moments of existence and happenings (2000, p. 26). He speaks of the manifolds of existence with each becoming more profound as different identities present themselves to various people or are shown by people—he talks of the complexity of intersubjectivity and its effect on the manifolds of identity (2000, p 32). He proposes the intending implied in the presence and absence of things—when things can be talked of or thought about in

their absence but it is not until they are present that we are fully able to intuit them with a range of complexities and understandings, maybe re-constructed from experience or knowledge.

Thus I orient myself towards a phenomenon and I am going to share my understanding of this with you, my reader. Immediately I have built upon the structure offered by Sokolowski. My reader, you might find some difficulty in experiencing school as a girl but you will be able to connect with some parts that I will present to you. You might be a boy but I will tell you of the lived experience of girls in a public high school with a wish that you will recognise some moments as similar to those of which you have seen or heard. I also suspect that with most of my readers, their lived experience of being in a public high school in Tasmania in the 21st century is somewhat unrealistic in 2013. However, empathy is all-powerful in understanding and through my re-telling of narratives, you might begin to understand how some girls experience school.

Standing Within

Within these narratives is a constant reference to the Symbolic Order. It looms across situations and words, dominating and watchful but constant. The thoughts of the living philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, inspire and capture my imagination when I read his association of applying symbols to human beings to bring them to a state of being recognised as something. I use books by Tony Myers and Sean Sheehan as their language and discussions of Žižek bring him close to my understandings. Žižek (in Sheehan, 2012, p. 12) speaks of language as the primary symbolic medium through which we interpret the world and is a given background for being born into the world and being socialised within a Symbolic Order.

The register of the symbolic is a complex network of linguistic and cultural signs, a chain of signification that makes sense of the world and our position within it. The chain is not just a series of links, but is also the containment that defines where a person stands within the Symbolic Order. The anteriority of the symbolic means that we are subjected to it in two senses: we are born into it, we are obliged, coerced to acquire through language our sense of who we are; second we are given our very subjecthood in this way
(Sheehan, 2012, p. 13)

I register Symbolic as a powerful mode of action, subversive or overt, that enmeshes or liberates; creates or destroys, builds or reduces but whatever its function of the moment, it alerts others to presence of being. A single word, no syntax, nothing, but it is still an introduction and one that welcomes one into an order of society. Thus, it is the Symbolic Order that is governance upon our society. Might I speak of education, I would understand that it is a signifier—it signifies actions and people. It speaks of bureaucracy and processes and I think students and teachers but a main understanding is that education is a structure implemented by a society thus, society functions here as the Symbolic Order as it is through defined ways of acting and being that education happens. This is a primary motivator for my inquiry and I develop this notion in a series of introductions through my thesis. In the process of recognising the importance of this, I use, as does Žižek, capitalisation of the Symbolic Order as with the Void and the Real. I also use this technique for the Big Other as it is the subject that represents the Symbolic Order or it is actually the Symbolic Order. I make mention here of the Big Other as it occurs throughout my work and I use this term because it is usually a representation of those things that assist with our placements in the Symbolic.

What do I seek to show you? How can I share my words with you so that I bring you on my journey into the world of a public high school education in Tasmania? Can I enable your understanding? I want you to be with me as I write these stories in

order to make meaning of what is happening. Let me firstly talk of science experiments and people. I was instructed, when I first began to write up an experiment, to never use the word I. Should I do as such, then it might demonstrate that I am unable to remain objective about the experiment I am doing. I had to note what happened, which is usually predictable. So closely do I take this advice on board, that when I begin writing my thesis and developing a style, I write without using the word “I”. I try hard to remove myself from the thesis and then can hardly find myself in my text. Where am I? Had I begun with due consideration of what it might be to be an agent of truth, to be a writer of lived experience, to be my “I”, then I might consider that to remove “I” from this inquiry might mean that I abdicate responsibility for the worlds of which I am speaking and writing, for my integrity in the presentation of all narratives and that, to represent myself as a dative of things made manifest, is a dishonest claim.

My Constant Companions

I explore much of my phenomenological understandings using the work of Max van Manen’s *Researching Lived Experience*, as he gently opens ideas and thoughts, possibilities and suggestions as to how I might express my new found learning. He is a constant companion throughout my writings and he is a very welcome guest in my work. This is my story and stories of girls I have taught. I am writing of what I have found and seen and it is through my eyes and my voice (van Manen, 1990, p. 13) that I am going to share my stories. How else can I share my deeply personal, emotional and intellectual journey if I do not actually include me in this epic? Thus I change my style. I move then, away from the linear dimension of writing an experiment, gathering data, recording it in a table and discussing it.

I consider that empirical data does not necessarily fit tightly with lived experience which to me is a non-quantifiable thing as it is to do with being and I am unable to understand how one subject might measure another's lived experience. However, there is always a space for that. I can create an epic saga of girls in school but I might be in danger of being too creative; of actually transforming lived experience into my perceptions and thus alienating the truth of moments and events. Tom Barone is another powerful force in encouraging me to explore my phenomenological understandings in a variety of artistic expressions. In his compendium of essays, *Aesthetics, Politics, and Educational Inquiry: Essays and Examples* (2000), he refers to the transformation of lived experience of curriculum into a metaphorical text of lives, poetry and being. I must not be fixated upon such aesthetics and must draw out interpretations and explicit assessment. This exposes me, then, to making propositions about how things might be. Sokolowski (2000, p. 101) discusses propositional states of affairs.

I intend to explore and propose yet, for truth to be revealed, I rely upon the intersubjectivity of my phenomenological research and my writing of text. This is contingent upon me, as an agent of truth using linguistic disclosure of evidence in the presentation of things (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 174), and for me, as a dative of all things that manifest themselves to me, to write with integrity and honesty. I do not intend to convince you using scientific logico associations. Instead, I seek to use my language and syntax so that we might share the understandings of an educational world. We might identify our own narratives in those I weave. We might associate terms and thoughts, and with this in mind, I come to understand that there is another way to tell of lived experience and being.

I narrow my questions to a few poignant ones as this might provide me with a way to plan for my writing and thinking. It is impossible to be random when presenting phenomenological research. If anything, this research seems to require a high degree of grounding in that vagueness leads into bewilderment and confusion, which suspends credibility and belief from my inquiry (Sokolowski, 2000, p.107).

My questioning is deliberate and investigates ideas around people within education. I listen to stories whilst I hold my own story close, letting it rest, slightly submerged under a facade. I recognise that I intend to understand several phenomena relating to experienced school lives and girls' worlds before I am able to develop a significant depiction of the Symbolic Order and its impact upon those contained within. I might be holding a secretive story close to me but, I mention it and this then elevates it into existence. Regardless of what is hidden, it announces its presence through its absence. This secrecy is a part that intends towards uncovering educational experiences of some girls.

I am the dative of manifestation of things that appear (Sokolowski, 2000, p.112) and I begin with my orientation as a teacher. With this I bring assumptions. I use teacher as a signifier, a signpost into education. Is it only possible to view education through teacher eyes? Might I try to understand girls in school through teacher eyes? What might it mean to look through teacher eyes? What might education be doing to me, as teacher? Does it want something from me? I am a teacher, so what might this exploration bring to me? Impinging upon this teacher notion, however, are my feminist thoughts and experiences. Is it possible for me to only view my questions as a non-gender being, an androgynous teacher? I am a female teacher. I inhabit a female body and my life is as a female. How, then, could my thesis not be embodied by feminist influence? I am. With this announcement, I bring my consciousness into

being. I am. As I begin, I step forth, from the Void of being and I announce my Self as a female teacher. What does this bring to the table? I, before being a gender, am a human being and as I write, I wish this to be a prominent aspect of my intention as I develop phenomenological understanding and as I explore philosophical meanings.

Notions of Philosophy

Notions of philosophy have been problematic for me as a female human being. I was introduced to philosophy, its beginnings and its journey through time but always in the company of male human beings. At no time, in my infantile philosophical travels, did I meet a female human philosopher except for my thesis supervisor. This troubles me as I hear historical male philosopher voices verbally assuming that women are less than men as they textually expound their understandings of what it is to be human and to be in this world. Aristotle does this as he questions women's capacities for thought and their second rate ways of being when he talks of women as not simply lacking deliberative skills but as having little chance of achieving even full chance of virtue and wisdom at home (Crisp, 1999, p. 138). Greek philosophy saw women as inferior, devoid of spirituality and incapable of telling the truth (Myers, 2003, p. 80). There is a very incomplete list but it exemplifies attitudes held by some male philosophers as to a particular view of women and, as philosophy is a valid and basic way of thinking in our world, does it not make it paradoxical that philosophy must only be for that half of humanity that is male as they are the only ones capable of profound thought? Yet, I am immersing myself in philosophy. This is tragic but tragedy does not create validity. I seek out female philosophers but find them few in number. I find the Slovenian philosopher, Žižek, speaks of humanity, not just the male ones. I find Sokolowski and van Manen, the aestheticism of Barone, as he

shows how it is possible to speak of experiences, and the perceptive thoughts of Gert Biesta as he explores education and its possibilities. I find Madeline Grumet, who aligns education with lives of women, and Ted Aoki, in his wonderings of curriculum as a very human thing, to be focussed on understanding the realities of human lives as they are lived in worlds. These people share a philosophy of humanity that touches my thoughts and through my words, finds a place to dwell.

The Gaze

I am writing about human beings and wondering as to the impact of gendering on life worlds as I inquire into educational experiences for some girls. I am, however, somewhat bewildered by attitudes of peers in that to write about women and girls, to write as a woman and to bring this into a public sphere, can cause some males to use a technique I call “the gaze”. Grumet (1988, p. 96) refers to this as “the look” and within that look sits nature and culture plus our information about both; it is our view of worlds. Should the male gaze be turned upon one, it seems to signify a silent disapproval or a bonding of males present as they share a troubled common understanding of the validity of female opinions and contemplations. It is a cultural view. It is a subtle thing and one, I believe, that some women recognise. With this as an overseer of my public announcements of my thesis topic, I refuse to be diminished still as Grumet (1988, p. 96) discusses the notion of this look as an unavoidable assault on freedom.

Fundamental Existentials

Van Manen (1990, p. 102) talks of four fundamental existentials. These are spatiality, corporeality, temporality and relationality. With these four fundamentals,

it is possible to begin to explore phenomena, to develop ways of understanding the phenomenon of the gaze, which strategically silences female voices. I alert my readers to situations, at times, in certain spaces of collegial discussion, with my Self as present when I am exposed to the phenomenon of the gaze and this I explore as a notion of lived social experience.

I outline my inquiry and show how these fundamentals form the basis of my phenomenology. I write of people (corporeal) in classrooms (spatial) in school (temporal) and involved in the construction of their social and cultural relations with a range of Others (relationality).

As I explore a phenomenon, developing understanding of it in its complexity and layers, I suspend contemplations and open my eyes to what is before me and what stories linger in my head. Should I grasp my phenomenological question and proceed immediately towards a researched answer, I might find myself repeating that which I previously thought. Instead, I suspend my beliefs. I turn a clear face and open eyes towards girls in school. I listen to stories and I recreate scenes as records of events. I bracket this world and things within it as I attempt to suspend all belief and seek only intention towards these things (Sokolowski, 2000, p.49) but I wonder as to the possibility of removing all prejudice and bias as I recreate scenes. Even as I wish to turn a clear face and mind to these recreations, whatever I explore is done with my Self as the storyteller and it is my language that I use. I can never be the first person in the stories of girls so I choose words for my audience—words that disclose empathy and understanding; words that will expose life worlds of girls in school and words that surround girls in school environs and society. I seek to interweave my understandings with language and syntax. I use their quoted stories, as it is their provenances that are to be understood. However, I am the teller of my own tales and

it is with difficulty that I suspend emotion as I reveal tales that are personal and place me in a position of risking my disclosed Self.

My audience must hearken and know of ways by which I form a depth to all stories, compelled by my progressive understanding of phenomena associated with narratives and fostered within my philosophical interpretation of life worlds. I learn to rent and rake. I unearth words and understandings that reinforce my thoughts.

I take phenomena, use it as data and interpret it phenomenologically. I enable a sedimentary compositional, layer upon layer of understandings, to permeate my writing, as I, agent of truth, unmask this phenomenon of educational experiences for some girls in Tasmania. I write and carefully begin my digging. I look at society and what it might mean for woman, a female gender. I narrow my focus into education, as it is there that my spark began. I gradually open up manifolds (Sokolowski, 2000, p 86) of educational experiences by delving into curriculum as a part of education, which in turn is a part of society. I present a complex Self whose task it is to make meaning of these experiences. When I focus on girls, I show one girl and her life world as exemplary of other girls but respecting her individuality. Layers into life worlds are opened up and I am inviting you to explore each gateway as I carefully unlock a door upon each experience. The door I open is upon a high school in Tasmania and throughout the thesis, I refer to this school as a Tasmanian Public High School or a public high school in Tasmania.

I am exposed to the ways of being within a school and players who play and act, characters whose lives are construed from their own realities and ways of being. I speak of characters (corporeal) and scenes of events (relationality) so that I might hold a spotlight over specific situations (spatial) and proceedings (time). My

spotlight shifts from character to character, lingers over props that encircle players, and focuses on an individual.

The classroom and classroom interfaces denote multifarious human interaction and kaleidoscopic contexts. Through use of storied narrative, I convey subliminal textures, which are interwoven into the complexity of an adolescent girl's life and her perceived status in the classroom. These textures are comprised of threads of pessimism and optimism, confidence, uniqueness of individual and gender interactions. They are the provenance of an adolescent girl. Woven textuality carefully forms a tapestry of a classroom and the daily events that impact upon those present in a traditional classroom.

My professional world is an education one. I teach and I teach adolescents. My task is to educate students while they are at school. As a teacher, I am impelled to understand what it is that I do and what is actually required of me by the society of which I am a part and by the bureaucratic mechanism that demands certain and specific things of me in my professional life. My understanding of the society of which I am ingredient and its impact upon individuals within education, is an essential aspect of my writing. I focus on my role within this system and how I intend towards education in a public high school in Tasmania. I either develop an acceptable understanding of the requirements of the bureaucracy that governs public education so that I might operate ethically within the parameters it places upon me or I learn to work within those cemented boundaries so I might educate students as an ethical, intelligent and loving human being, intent upon the notion of developing a person as a whole being.

Good Education

Focussing upon notions of good education, I am guided by specific questions in the development of my understanding. My focus upon good education is structured upon the words of Biesta (2006) when he seeks to understand education in the light of socialisation, qualification and subjectification. He alludes to the purposes of education and discusses qualification as the gaining of skills and knowledge; socialisation as the means by which we become part of particular social, cultural and political orders; and subjectification as the means by which we become an independent individual, not reliant upon the qualification as a member of a particular order, but one that is autonomous and liberating, and is being (Biesta, 2010, p. 20).

If this is the purpose of education and if it is demonstrative of educational institutions' processes, then is it of benefit to girls? Is this happening to girls or is it a fanciful notion, offered as a theory and no praxis? Are our institutions about freedom and being? Are they about autonomy and liberation? Perhaps they are perpetuators of power structures and a form of sexualisation for girls? I consider that I make these inquiries from a posture of a deep desire to understand and to gain meaning. Van Manen says that true questioning is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence and it is with this that I take my questioning stance (1990, p. 43).

My guiding questions were initially formed as I read Martin Seligman's work on optimism, *The Optimistic Child*. How do I find out about lived experiences of people? Why do I see a lack of confidence and Self-belief in some girls (Seligman, 1995, p. 28)? What is actually happening inside a school that affects those within? How might it be possible to modify experiences of girls so that they develop greater confidence and more positive outlooks? What conditions might be needed for this

change to take place? How might girls come into being? How might a girl have the courage to expose her Self to others? I pose these questions so I might expose an approach whereby possible understandings are to be gleaned from girls through observation and discussion; through listening to stories, while delaying my own stories; through watching acting and scenes; and through observing complex dances within a classroom.

When I first begin to garner information of lives, I search in many academic spaces to find a survey to conduct—one that allows for a totally objective data gathering exercise. I find none that satisfies my requirements. I feel uncomfortable reading some of the examples and know that I cannot use such a structured set of parameters to begin looking at girls and their provenances. What am I looking for? Am I seeking to confirm all my truths and biases? Am I searching for an explanation of why things are as they are? Am I looking for someone else to tell me the veracity of how things are? These questions are confirmation of a need to understand evidence that is being played out in front of me, in my classroom, with me as a co-author of happenings. I watch but see events through my eyes—my own truths and propositions. I hear the stories of girls and actors within their lives. I examine and investigate layers of meanings that might be attached to lives and situations, to phenomena. One thing cannot be only one-dimensional—objects have origins and uses; a maker and a destroyer; a history and a continuum. An object is not just a manifestation and thus, girls are not just gendered humans. Sokolowski (2000, p. 190) discusses this notion of proposition and phenomenology. He says that these modes of thinking are propositional reflection and a phenomenological philosophical reflection. In a propositional reflection, a single event, a statement, an observation is made or claimed and from this stance we seek data to prove that reflection—it is as if

the statement has been made with no other reference points or datives. I take the statement that “girls are doing well in school” and I then seek data to demonstrate and uphold such a claim. I can do this as I do find empirical data demonstrating that girls are passing literacy tests. In this society, we measure literacy as a state of achievement and standardised testing in the form of NAPLAN (National Assessment Plan in Literacy and Numeracy) tests that are given to students at pre-determined stages of their educational careers. From this, a national observed trend is that girls achieve higher on these tests than do boys. I see this quantifiable data but there is no more information given other than a description of the school, which thus intensifies the data as a political and social issue because schools are functional processors of pre-determined educational outcomes.

Should I leave this idea as true and not take a step back to observe everything that is happening for the girls — their provenances, their narratives, their scenes and events, their friends and their culture — then I remain in the propositional state of reflection, a natural attitude. I wish to consider stories of girls and what is happening for them in schools. To investigate and reflect on this, I must understand relative phenomena within their worlds. I cannot leave an isolated notion. Consequently, I step back and apply my thinking to the layers that constitute stories of girls. What is really happening? Is what I see in the classroom all that is happening? Is there something else going on that I am not aware of? Thus, when an academic informs me that girls are successful at school, I can remain in a state of acceptance or a natural attitude—I apply no other level of thinking to this. Once I commence thinking of things such as who is this academic and why are they saying this? What is their story? Is there a political or social purpose in furthering these measurements? What

layers are subliminal in this story? I begin to consider and I become phenomenological in my reflections (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 178).

I choose a phenomenological reflection, which is an exploration of life worlds. I want to understand. I want others to begin to build their understanding. When I read of another human story, a human provenance brought into being, I gradually begin to link associations, and my understanding of stories of students, which creates a larger and more complex educational landscape than I initially understood. Do the same things happen? Did I hear the same words? Do I sometimes feel the same way about images or events? Have I been treated the same way? I want to connect with others. I want to understand others. With empathy, I can build my connections and understanding; contemplating and considering phenomena. I can make sense of incidents that materialise or destabilise. I seek to understand influence, what it is and what it might mean for an educator. I intend to interpret anecdotes of girls and to offer glimpses into lives, to open up doors and contemplate through windows, which are still separated but visually linked. I want others to envisage and identify; to heed and ponder; to peruse and see commonality within experience yet understand a singular uniqueness of individual. Personalising girls' stories and my role in beginning this road might establish a story that is human and invoke a reality of lived human experience, allowing for credibility of my research through my interpretations and presentations—a phenomenological reflection. Tom Barone (2000, p. 130) says that empathic understanding is the ability to participate vicariously in a form of life as manifested in a particular pattern of actions. I invite my readers to participate as I create opportunities for releasing reflective thinking into lived experiences in schools.

I see empathy and knowledge as empowering for a teacher as she pursues understanding of a child in her interpretations of conditions for that child and a depth of knowledge of a child's being. Giving voice to characters and their stories in an intimate view of school life allows for empathy to evolve and with this empathic understanding I begin to conceive an idea of a process to construct an environment with potential for positive change within education.

Barone (2000, p. 131) discusses the development of empathy and understanding of the profound experiences that underlie every person's existence. This mode of investigation requires a critical honesty (Barone, 2000, p. 192), which can be conveyed through the telling of a story, using characters that are participants within a story. Examination of elements that currently and historically construed the daily reality of the girls' lives provides the phenomena that are my impetus and the basis for my questions. To probe these phenomena and to relate them to participants, to make meaning of them and to make them real for a reader, my stories would need to be human—stories of humans and their experiences. Vicarious understanding of reality for those within educational walls might bare acknowledgement as voices begin to emerge from stories.

So why would I choose narratives to be my mode of phenomenological inquiry? I look to a range of authors who welcome and celebrate the use of narrative in exposing lived experience (Riessman, 2008; Barone, 2000; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). I need to be honest: I use real stories, not virtual and imagined ways of being so that my phenomenological inquiry reveals validity and credibility.

Sometimes, when I seek to understand something, I listen for what is being said and what remains unsaid. I hear the chosen words of the author/speaker as he/she

relates a series of sentences—syntax to extend meaning. I take note of the topic and the parameters within which this topic is being given to me. I think about why those words have been chosen and why I am hearing a story told by one person as a presentation of an event (for example). What haven't I been told? Who is this person who is telling me the story? What were the other people/animals/objects doing/thinking/being? What might this expose to me? If an audience remains in a natural attitude and accepts what is being presented then might I not call this a one-dimensional offering (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 109)? I am identifying a signifier—a signpost and direction giver but I also understand the dynamics of language, in this case a signifier, and recognise that I am seeking a string of information words that will fabricate my navigated understandings of the Symbolic Order of education.

Song of Iceland

In order to extend this notion of storytelling, I would like to refer briefly to the Icelandic Sagas and the place of women within the sagas. As an enormous series of oral traditions and storytelling, the Sagas were written down long after the events had happened and the people had died. Jenny Jochens, in her book *Women in Old Norse Society* (1995), exposes lives of women in Norse society. She does it through the presentation of stories and through the absence of some characters. She discusses the Sagas as stories of men. It is through the absence of women, except for the mythical and queenly, that it is possible to understand lives of those times. Absence is a signifier and presence is another—by being absent from most sagas and present only in the guise of mythical or queenly, it is possible to begin to understand the position of women in Old Norse society. Presence and absence as discussed by Sokolowski (2000, p. 36) shows an intensely dualistic mode of being as I apply it to the women

of Norse society. He speaks of presence as being thought of, by some, as the only way we can conceive of something but through the absences of this thing, and using absence from narrative, I see that there is an implication of a level of non-importance of woman within society even though it is not actually said. Thus, by absence from narratives, I can have an intention of woman and understand this signifier with no accompanying syntax but her absence allows no other comprehension. I stand, as I have no presence to extend my understanding of woman but I see her absence and thus her credibility as a valued human in Old Norse Society. I use this as I see presence and absence in life worlds as a way that I might gain understandings of experiences. As I present scenes and stories, there is a possibility of noting the absence of some things. This absence, might speak to you of what is happening and, as a profound technique of provocation, I use this to inspire further questions such as: Where are girls in scenes of action and why might they be silent? Where are women as leaders in society? Why do I look at numbers of women in poverty and note the absence of comparative male numbers? I explore these further along in Chapter 3.

Spotlight on Profiles

In my thesis, I introduce characters, real people who inhabit life worlds of which I speak. I examine their relationships as they are within a classroom during a school day. I disclose reactions and responses. I repeat dialogue as given to me. Barone (2000, p. 33) speaks of character construction in writing. Should I speak only of girls and boys and a teacher, should I omit voice and syntax, I might leave my readers with a singular notion of how this phenomenon exists within a life world. My phenomenon might become flat and tuneless. I use direct quotations from

experienced events. I show subtle shadows in a classroom, shading events and situations. I build strength and individuality. My characters have real personalities, some of which my readers might have seen before, in similar situations. A teacher exposes her thoughts in an interior monologue, a soliloquy in stage. I give human faces to characters as I expose their worlds through narrative and dialogue. These stories might be revealed as those of many girls who are impacted upon by identical phenomena, which induce similar behaviours. Whereby do we as educators learn to change if not by investigating real people who play important roles in the school context? How can we understand our “subjects” if not through developing empathic understanding? To read of lived experiences in an educational institution might inspire my readers to consider and reflect upon what they observe and hear in their own situations. Might not we develop a dialogue about our perceptions? Might it be possible to encourage dialogue with other educators, community and students? Through this we might ask questions and seek answers and lead ourselves towards knowledge of people with whom we work and an understanding of social and political dimensions that underlie lives and experiences. Further learning of socio/political conditions, manipulations and understandings of their impact might be extended into a notion of socialisation.

Observations of current phenomena that are within classrooms and in playgrounds alert me to possibilities of issues surrounding stakeholders in education. I talk to adolescent boys and slowly gather snippets unmasking daily lives of girls, and my understanding grows exponentially over the time during which I began my observations and implemented my learning into a real situation of discovery. I hear of harassment of a sexual nature towards girls. I hear conversations commenting upon girls’ breasts. I observe girls stepping away from pursuits and letting the boys

take over. I am constantly accosted by intimidating behaviours by boys, using tactics designed to humiliate and denigrate. I watch physical aggression overtake any assertion and win. I see girls remaining passive in class, absent in their presence, while boys get my attention. I watch girls overload with makeup, glaringly painted faces obscuring their adolescent beauty, which is made absent from cosmetic presence. I have to watch for stray bosoms lunging from low cut tops of girls. I have to speak with boys about why girls wear such clothes but their comments refute anything but the idea that some girls dress like “prostitutes” (the boys’ word). So I wonder as to a presence of a fraudulent Self and an absence of a real Self. Is this purposeful and what meaning might I glean from these presences and absences?

How might it be possible to modify experiences of the girls and thus affect futures and presents? My practice as a teacher and an educator plus my lived experience of adolescence led me to thinking about differences that might have been made in previous happenings if I had used my current understandings of educational experiences. With that reflection, it was a natural flow on to a concept of developing an all-girls class, and which led further into the development and implementation of *Just Us Girls* mentoring programme. I tell of the all-girls class early in my thesis so I might begin by promoting a state of questioning as a certain attitude of puzzlement provokes the asking of why I need an all-girls class when everyone knows that high schools in Tasmania are heterogeneous. I subliminally plant an idea of educational experiences and, not only their impact upon lives, but also I offer an idea that education has more profound purposes than just qualification of students.

Dramatic Interpretations

My methodology is different from a traditional mode of careful structure but there are reasons for this. To further develop a concept of individual stories and a tapestry of lives, I weave the stories into a series of play acts (Shephard, 2004; Milham, 2012) which I conceive as structures through the use of informational texts by Paul Milham, Simon Shephard and Mick Wallis who, as writers about performance provide an extra layer to my understandings of play writing. Each act depicts a separate scene and has differing characters. The characters are real. They are not imagined. My characters enact the themes of hegemonic masculinity versus femininity and they show the socialisation of both boys and girls within the school environment. I attempt to show a teacher as a main character in my play within the classroom. I let her talk, a soliloquy, about her feelings and her thoughts. I am that teacher and it is these reflections that lead to an all-girls class.

I choose to use dramatisation of educational experiences as it presents me with an opportunity to bring forth landscapes and characters with an efficiency of language (Barone, 2000, p. 33). It allows me to present events, that others might attempt to recreate. Thus it allows a drama as a manifold of opportunity, which might afford varying understandings, but I am hoping, that my depth of presentation enables a commonality of understanding to grow. Before I begin the play, I introduce my characters and their landscape to you, as it is within that characterisation that I expose humans as being (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 59). It is a courtesy to my readers, as, by the very nature of my thesis, I am unable to fully expose dialogue and a continuity of relationship development. I offer short, tight scenes structured using real events and people to expose what happens for some girls in classrooms.

The acts are three in number. Act One, Scene One takes place in a traditional classroom in a heterogeneous class. The characters are the teacher, some girls and the ‘Cool Dude’ boys. I demonstrate what is happening within a classroom—the events, actions and behaviours.

Act One, Scene Two brings our teacher to the fore as she moves from the staffroom to the classroom. This scene centres upon the teacher and her actions and reactions. I use the literary technique of soliloquy whereby the teacher is using this technique as a mode of Self-reflection, not inviting audience consideration.

Act One, Scene Three focuses on some girls who are in the classroom. I allow them to disclose their responses to a classroom drama, thus sharing this phenomenon as they live it.

After each scene, I discuss the actions in light of understandings I glean from my inquiry. I also attempt to extend some stories and introduce additional information that might further my reader’s understanding of the context, the characters and the themes.

Act Two, Scene One revolves around the possibilities for developing a girls class and what that might mean. The teacher is frustrated and she has no further ideas about how to move beyond the negative socialising that is inherent within the Hidden Curriculum that is a major part of the classroom education. Act Two, Scene Two becomes a vehicle for the teacher to orate a soliloquy again. Here she thinks and articulates her observations of what happens to some girls in the classroom. She ponders over the seeming inequity in funding for girls and fumes against the unfair sexualisation of girls by the Media and society. She questions what she does and

what she could possibly do to make a difference to the girls' provenances. Her meanderings and wonderings help her to construct possibilities for the future.

Act Three is short but it is vignette of our teacher as she thinks of her all-girls class.

I have used soliloquy as a technique as I feel it is a truthful tool and one discussed by James Hirsch, in his book, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, as he speaks of Shakespeare, one of the world's great dramatists. It exposes thought and a person behind that thought (2003, p. 342). I use it in an almost secretive way, so I can show that our teacher is not seeking approval from an audience but simply speaking as she thinks. I know this, as I am our teacher. I am sharing an experience, remembering my perceptions and feelings, my emotions and ideas. Sokolowski (2000, p. 154) discusses intersubjectivity and this predicates my use of drama as a writing technique. This allows an audience to experience another body, other thoughts and feelings, gestures that convey a language of body. There is recognition that other bodies are human too and that is the primary source of information when human beings meet. My dramatic technique draws in other similar bodies as they watch and identify, seek similarities or opposites, find truth or feel disbelief. It allows for another to see how another body might experience a world. The very notion of intersubjectivity denotes relationship between subjects; shared meaning and understandings between the corporeal in time and in a space—a landscape of possibilities.

Textuality of Voice

I present various ways in which I approach my phenomenological study. I attempt to expose my use of narrative and play; I invite you to understand my weaving of text

into a thesis, and offer you an experience in my process. I like the notions of text and weaving as Roland Barthes talks of text as an ancient word involving spinning and weaving (in Allen G. , 2003, p. 80). I am weaving an intricate tapestry of narrative and pedagogy, of female and male. Graeme Allen, as author of the book *Roland Barthes*, clearly exposes Barthes' intensity as a person who deeply understood language and all its intricacies. I find that using his ideas of weaving becomes integral in my explanation of educational experiences. This metaphor of weaving is a constant throughout my thesis as it is through the notion of spinning and weaving, composing a tapestry of life through oral yarn and text, that complexities of life worlds might become phenomena requiring unravelling.

It is time now to speak of voice—my voice and voices of those who populate my tapestry and season my story.

Adriana Cavarero has a beautiful understanding of vocal capacity. “In the uniqueness that makes itself heard as voice, there is an embodied existent or rather a being there, esserci, in its radical finitude, here and now”(Cavarero, 2005, p. 173). She creates a means whereby it is possible to understand a complex philosophy of voice behind its use and purpose. Her studies of ancient civilizations and her inquiries into philosophy of voice are in her book, *For More Than One Voice*. A voice is very personal and distinctive as it is used to bring words into meaning (Cavarero, 2005, p. 8). A voice has pitch and resonance so how is it possible to use voice in text? How can I demonstrate pitch and resonance, tone and emotion when I have only the flat page on which to impress my words? My corporeal reality vocalises my words as I write and bring them into a reality.

I begin my explanation of who is writing and voicing this thesis by disclosing my Self, while recognising how important it is to me that as my words are read, my

reader will wish to know more, avidly turn a page, wonder as to what might happen and who will be introduced next. I want my reader to be deep within my writing and to be a part of my narrative as themes present themselves and characters become identifiable. I want to build empathy and enjoyment.

I cannot use a signifier word of education as a stand-alone. I have to use signifiers as leaders into signified ideas thereby affording recognition of significance of that which is being voiced (Allen, 2003, p. 83). My words must be read within contexts otherwise the dynamic nature of language might lead into other meanings that are not intended. However, to bring tone into my voice, and thus my words, I use metaphor and metonymy as significant exponents of emotion and depth (Myers, 2003, p. 4). I speak of stick-thin girls in metaphor, and infer the horrendous implications of cutting into a human body as I speak of girls who sculpt their body for another's approval – metonymy. The implications of other images and notions are inherent in my use of these techniques and it is, thus, through language that I am able to voice my text. I want you to hear my Self and my being, through all that I write. I do not wish for my writing to be interchangeable with another's as that would devalue my voice.

I take an artist's stance, complete with the artistic freedom equated with the craziness of artistic skill. Zizek gives me permission to do this (Sheehan, 2012, p. 1). I have watched him on You Tube (Zizek: *Why be Happy When You Could be Interesting?*) as he speaks passionately and vividly on a selected topic. I have read discussions of his work and Sheehan (2012, p. 4) refers to the poetic nature of his writing as he constructs a rich and dense texture of text using metaphor and metonymy. He ducks and weaves as he sounds out a range of philosophies and ideas. It is done with such liveliness and such passion that I am drawn into his words as I seek to draw my readers in.

With language, I create my narrative and those of girls as we play out our day-to-day experiences within education.

I move through my intentions with words from a respected author—one to whom readers might respond as they see revelations within the words this author might speak, and recognise, in them, a complete summarising allusion to my whole thesis.

Lived experience is a starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.

(van Manen, 1990, p.36)

I am at one point of my phenomenological research of lived experience. I weave my text with threads of experiences and thus I am beginning my textual expression and it is with great hope that I wish for the essence of girls' educational experiences to make itself known as I become dative of things that are made manifest to me (Sokolowski, 2010, p.32).

Tapestry under Gaze

This chapter, together with the next, conspires to present what happened in an all-girls class and holds up for viewing so many notions of education, so many perversions of good education and a deeply personal experience of how it was and thus, with my eyes and voice I create a text for others.

Within this exposition, I bare all stakeholder threads—students, teachers, principals, community members, government—and I provide a space, a public space for this to happen. Van Manen (1990, p. 101) might approve of my story telling as being inclusive of the mainstays of phenomenological research—body, time, space

and relationships. I tell of all and the different parts that go to make the whole, the moments and the people who compose educational spaces.

I run through the threads unravel them and leave them exposed for the gaze from Other. Then and only then can I re-weave them to reveal completeness, wholeness, of text that will invite a look, a thought and a response; but it is with my hand that I weave, and it is with my eyes that I gaze on textual threads disclosing stories of educational experiences for girls.

Are you waiting for me to offer an explanation? Would you like me to tell you what this was all about? Perhaps I could explain the unfairness of events and situations. I could be the explicateur of this phenomenological inquiry and I could tell my reader what it all means. I could give you my idea of truth. I am not the one with the “right” answers. I am not the one with the “gift” of explicateur; the one who perpetuates the constantly inequitable see-saw of inequality through a view that my reader could not understand unless I explain it all (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 136). Should I enact a full explanation of my phenomenological inquiry, I would be unable to claim this inquiry as such.

So I ask of my readers:

“What do you want of me?” I ask following Zizek and his question, *Che vuoi?*

There could be two answers.

“Tell me what it means for futuristic views of education for girls. Where should we go now?” might be the answer

Or, someone might wish to say,

“I need to think about this. I already have an understanding of girls in education but I need to consider this story in light of my experiences.”

To either answer, my response is the same.

My task is to be poet and storyteller. I find threads, watch them become coloured into intentionality of living colours for a tapestry, and then I begin my phenomenological weaving of text. When you gaze upon it, what will you see?

I might be forthright and representative of dominating ideologies, which I cunningly insert into text, where they might be seen as prescriptions for failure or success. I might be subversive and evasive and not quite let out the whole truth, saving some for my deeply personal world. I offer puzzlement and I offer questioning. I offer time for reflection as I make reference to a previous notion and draw it up with me as a platform leading up to another level. I do this again, giving my reader a chance to revisit a thought, a wisp of idea, as I build a ladder into further levels.

Do my readers understand of what I am writing? I ask what it is you want of me but I lead this further and ask for what purpose you require a particular response.

I leave my text as open-ended. I do not want to write a happy ending where everything is resolved and discovered—where truth is made known. I do this as I write, because it is my phenomenological inquiry that has narrative as threads. I speak, in my chapter on Self, about the progression of Self through the stairs of thinking as a gradual dawning of understanding but it is not a movement that comes to an end, as an arrival at the door of truth. I don't know what the truth is for you and from a moral position of integrity I disclose my narrative. I know what I see and hear; I take my role as storyteller seriously and transform lived experiences into a textual essence but my distillation process is different in that I use poetic devices to

separate the heavy layers of understandings from the vapour of moments that, unless captured and cooled floats away, unknown and unrecognised.

I share common human characteristics and begin my journey with a certain set of understandings and knowledge. As I am a unique individual, with unique experiences and I use language in ways that might vary from another, I am unable to distil a concentrate of my truth that will appease a thoughtful unique mind with their own unique association with the world. I am unwilling to impose my understandings upon others but I offer them for reflection.

Charles Bingham and Biesta (2010) speak of philosopher, Jacques Ranciere's foray into schools and education with a view that it is emancipatory to be given a notion that can be unwrapped layer by layer. It is emancipatory to consider that we all begin with the same notion but it is how we take the layers off, how we take time to observe colour and texture, how we crumple it up or spread it out for clear viewing. It is what we make of each layer, and how we might use that layer as a wrap for a notion that an individual might glean from the original thinking.

In phenomenological moments, I offer contemplation of phenomena where I send an invitation to look upon the words of my stories and consider from a range of different angles. What do you already know? What have you experienced and what might you see as being my position as dative of these things that are made manifest to me (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 32)? How do you understand the many sides of the objects, the people, the place and the events?

What are your ideas of educational experiences in a public high school in Tasmania? I have, as my characters, real people who have real experiences. Barone (2000, p. 125) credits the philosopher Frederick Nietzsche, with offering the idea that

disparate thoughts and actions can be shaped into an aesthetic form through will and autonomy and this is known as style. It offers a story where each unique being is within their story but their story is not finished until it is over. It offers a reflection of lived experiences of girls, contemplated as philosophies of a phenomenon in a dynamic world.

Together with van Manen and Barone, I share a similar hope and that is that reflection upon this text will, as an empathic experience, powerfully animate another as they plot their narrative, as they weave their own lives amongst a world of diversity and those *nano*-moments, miniscule seconds of language might enable a phenomenological reflection.

As I draw near to the end of my thesis, I find myself considering the tradition of a need for a concluding chapter—the one that summarises all I have said and draws a conclusion to my work. I find this concept difficult to bring forth into a reality, as I am not concluding anything. Like any phenomenon, this study is layered and deep, it consists of real people and real events and it has been through artistic license that I have given voice to these educational experiences. I ask you to do the same as it is with a reader's eyes and Self, that my words will have meaning. In closure, I wish to leave subtle suggested possibilities for other stories to extend this further and to blend with images of understanding educational experiences for those within education.

Chapter 2: Orienting to a Classroom Phenomenon

The pedagogue plays an important role in making these engagements more likely to occur. It is true, that sometimes the student, unguided, may stumble upon aesthetic and educational activities that transgress against the familiar by casting new light. But I believe that it is the role of the educator consciously to select and arrange features of the classroom environment so as to increase the likelihood of such encounters.

She must contribute to the elegance and the strength of each Self-narrative indirectly, without insisting upon her own style.

Tom Barone

For each of us, as human beings, scribing our own story, our own narrative of our Self in all its changing faces, is our lived experience. I am mother of my own life story. I am placing my world in a sphere of education where narratives emerge and my role is to hear and take note of these narratives. How is it possible to know what narratives to hear first as their constant noise berates my ears and cries for action? Barone (2000, p. 129) proposes that it is through my knowing of my students and having empathy with them that a foundation for a self-narrative might be found but I find the sheer volume to be overwhelming. Our narratives converge and are voiced in one space. It is the relationality, what happens between student and teacher, at a time in a space, which I speak of. I speak of narrative and story throughout my writings and each time I mention them, I do so with a regard to the uniqueness of each voice and story. Cavarero (2005, p. 134) speaks of the importance of the phonic and the

semantic with both contributing to the embodied symphony of humanity and vocal tapestries of lived experience.

I move to a classroom scenario being acted out by protagonists. Temporarily and spatially, it would seem to be impossible to hear the narratives that are being told but *White Noise Curriculum* heaves and moans in its ominous silence, while each person in that room is spattered, stirred and scorched by the muted narratives. It is so challenging to hear them all but I am wedged in a Hidden Curriculum as it is unfurled—a game of winners and losers, boys and girls, weak and strong, powerful and disempowered. This is a room of engagements and negotiations, of rejections and acceptances—all components of a *White Noise Curriculum* which is a silent but effective undertone throughout the room. I discuss this further in Chapter 4.

My honesty dictates that I write of my responses to the narratives that constitute a classroom world. Barone discusses the notion of critical storytelling and the heightened importance of honesty where politically incorrect, distasteful notions, designed to prick the conscience of my readers (2000, p. 193) are to be conveyed and perceived. Past situations mean that I can say that I find it very testing to build deep understanding of personal stories in a room full of fraught, disrespectful games designed to represent a hierarchical structure of power. My intentions of classroom environment become less important than survival at different times. Trust is a lurching maimed animal that rests peacefully on rare occasions. I imagine that it is possible to read self-narratives that are being fashioned, however, as all protagonists become entangled in a mesh of masculine and feminine; a world reflecting society but inhabited by adolescents in the throes of developing identities, Self; by adolescents poised in the Void, becoming subjectivised in ways that perpetuates the standing orders of society. This world can only provide the Real girl with symbols of

woman—symbols that did not reflect humanity—the Symbolic Order (Myers, 2003, p. 20).

An all-girls class is a new story in this school. It is a new Void in which to situate girls. How might one understand the Void? Žižek (in Myers, 2003, p. 36) alerts us to its presence and I understand it as a gap between my pure essence, my Self, the Real, and the Symbolic Order. It is almost as if the Void is where one waits until its reality in terms of symbols, is announced to the world of existence. It is a chance to revisit a Symbolic order using revitalized language and to offer a time and space for girls to come into their own worlds, to come into being (Biesta, 2006, p. 10). A girl's poetry of her Self has a chance without the howling of power inserting itself into her interpretations.

I turn towards the classroom, which is where things happen. This classroom is different. It has not appeared in this school before. It is a world populated by teenaged girls, aged about fourteen—a small world, enclosed by four walls and entered by one of two doors.

Open the door and walk through, into this room. How did we get here to such a world? If I turn around and look behind me, I see images and reflections of how this world came to be. Power plays, negativity, disrespect and misogyny has provided barriers to my teaching. These tangible aspects of a Hidden Curriculum have corrupted my teaching and hindered opportunities for girls. I stay in the present but acknowledge these things in their absence.

It is my intention to deliver a new narrative with some different actors and in a new landscape, even though the school remains the same. I am telling a story and helping girls, as bards, to write their own poetry.

I invite you to accompany me as I begin my naïve exposure of this classroom phenomenon as I saw it in 2007.

I begin by writing of a teacher's deliberations, as she is a central lens of an unfolding picture. I use a technique of inner monologue as my teacher reflects, revealing thoughts and feelings in a space of trust. Barone (2000, p. 36) talks of monologue as a powerful mechanism for inciting empathy and understanding of difficulties and dangers for teachers who seek to write their own poetry and who are helping others do the same.

An All-Girls Class Evolves

Something is happening at the school and I cannot figure out what it is. Best left in my head and ignored as, no doubt, there is a political move afoot—someone is on the upward stairs while someone else is about to slide down. This kind of thing happens all the time in some schools—nepotism is rife! Enough of that!

My Principal is seeking me out and I really wonder why. Here it comes—she “really” needs someone to be Grade Eight Coordinator and she knows that I am the right person. I guessed immediately who was on the downhill slide. I loathe middle school—I don't want to teach in middle school. I am Grade Ten Coordinator. Well, pride goeth before a fall!

Hard thinking here, as I know I am good at Grade Coordinator and I want to remain there. I know that I want a fair go for girls in this school. I know that there is one way I can get this happening.

I tell my Principal that I will if I can set up and run an all-girls class in Grade Eight. I want total control over how the programme runs and operates. I think she might be desperate and sure enough, I got it!

I got my class. I was on the way. I am telling you this because I would hate you to think that opportunities like this ever happen unless there is a chance for extra money to come

into the school or for someone to use this on their Curriculum Vitae. I don't care. This is a chance to set up and investigate what I am so concerned about and I can do it in the school where I first articulated my concerns about girls. What makes this even better is that I will make a thesis out of this and I will understand everything about it. Overjoyed! What is more, I am offered some level of support and that is great. It is wonderful. I can just see what it will be like! I am running ahead of myself now.

It is not easy, actually to set something up like this. It is a foreign notion to most of the school community and something that, to some, might appear to be rather pointless. I have to show them that it is not and I have to show parents that they will be making the right choice for their daughters if they allow them to come into this class. At this stage, I am rather flavorsome in the school as this is a new concept and might actually work. Secretly, I think someone sees this as an addition to his or her Curriculum Vitae. There is a boys' class, which has been begun by a friend of the Principal. I digress.

I need to get the message out to the school community, so I write a letter to all parents of Grade Seven girls (of those who will be going in to Grade Eight in 2007). This letter outlines a plan to operate an all-girls class in Grade Eight. It also speaks of me as the teacher of these girls. A very brief overview is given of why I consider this to be important for girls but I do impress that it is a chance for girls to learn without interference and to be able to explore interests. I also refer to the notion that girls seem to do better in a single sex class, especially at this age where there are all sorts of physiological, social, and cognitive changes occurring. I explain that I will offer a safe and secure environment for these girls.

Letters go out and I am now waiting for the responses.

Responses are back. Eighteen parents want their daughters in my class! I am worried though as I know I will not be able to operate a class with only eighteen. It would be absolutely perfect if that were a possibility. I know what is going to happen and as it turns out I am right. Into this class will go some of those girls who are nuisances in other classes. Maybe I am being viewed as a saviour but I have my doubts. I suspect it is a removal process and a saving for other staff. I can deal with that. I have what I wanted and this is my

beginning. How good is that? I will try to coerce a few other girls into my class as I feel they might benefit. At least I am a popular teacher and I don't have students quivering at the knees at the thought of being in my class! It is not just popularity that I have and I want us to share the idea of what makes a good teacher. It is important to me that we all understand "good" teaching. I care about my students; I take time to hear them and respond; I support and encourage; I laugh. Just a little idea of what I might have to offer my students and I will help them write their poetry.

I do convince a few others and now I have twenty-six students for 2007. Amazing and feels so good! I have much to think about now. I have much to find out about and plan for. If I am going to make this work, I need to be prepared but it is not about being rigid.

Schools operate in a way where funding might mean an extra teacher or some extra resources. Government sources are not finite and it is up to schools to utilise money efficiently. Thus, being given other students and not being able to operate with only eighteen students is totally understandable.

My inquiry involves several ideas. Firstly, I am able to focus on the diversity within my class—personality, interests, and individual abilities. I believe that I am able to remove any gender bias from the room and take each person as human. This, in itself is interesting. Even as I consider that statement, I wonder then if, when I design any other programme, am I doing it with the first aspect of diversity being gender?

I have two explorations here. I am working with a fragile age group, which is in early adolescence. I am also involved as a teacher who has not been able to operate with a single gender classroom before. There is much to learn. I understand that when providing a learning environment, it is not constructed around what I think girls are. By this I mean, I must be careful not to stereotype gender notions of girls (Campbell & Wahl, 2002, p. 722). Campbell and Wahl, as authors of *What's Sex Got to do with It*, suggest that it is important to understand the role of the teacher in a

single sex classroom. I am a teacher, a female and a Self. As I invite you into my classroom, I wonder what your understanding of a female teacher Self is. Perhaps this idea of a female might be considered as a derivative of male or it might have notions of gender making its influence known. It is imperative, however, that there is an understanding that this whole investigation is being carried out by me as a reflective teacher. I am aware of who I am and my level of socialisation. I am also aware of me as the dative of these things, which have manifested themselves to me at this time and in this space.

My purpose in designing this classroom layout is to encourage students to become independent and autonomous, to be in charge of their lives and to be empowered to be in charge of their own narratives. It is about attempting to grow human capacity in a small room. Am I asking too much?

I also wish to focus on the notions offered by Biesta, in that education is about qualification, socialisation and subjectification. For me, I wish to focus on subjectification—the bringing into being of a subject. Biesta emphasises the subjectification function of schools, as a democratic conception in which the coming into the world of individuals is understood (Biesta, 2006, pp. 69-70). It is this understanding that is propelling me to action.

Tom Barone (2000, p. 33) discusses the importance of showing you my characters, real students, real human beings, as I am inviting you in to their world so you might begin to understand them, in all their worldly ways of being and in all their actions and possessions. He suggests that the building of empathy is vital as we develop a shared understanding of the experienced curriculum for these girls. I do this using his suggestions of literary techniques of writing about what they do (comportment), what they say (commentary) and what they make (products). As I am

dealing with students' curriculum and education experiences, I am relying on a shared understanding concerning that no two individuals can ever experience the world in the same way because they are unique and individual.

Personal Intentions

I do not intend to unfold a whole year, as there is much that goes on in classrooms that is repetitive and, in this case, is not overtly important in the story.

I write of the girls within this classroom landscape and my intentions for an all girls' class. I speak of teacher as researcher and *phrominos*, wise teacher (Treanor, 2010,p.178). I am present throughout. I organise some of its dimensions and twists. I use my profound understandings of human beings and education to begin to address the problems of middle school aged girls in a public high school system. I include one major programme I instigated during this year, as, just as an all girls' class is unusual, so to is a mentoring programme for adolescent girls—*Just Us Girls*.

Stories of Protagonists

By the culmination of a story or story like project a student may have discovered new options for interpreting the world and new possibilities for living. She may have gained greater control over her destiny. She may have redescribed her Self. With the guidance of a wise and empathetic teacher, she may have written some mighty strong poetry.

(Barone, 2000, p. 130)

Within this schoolroom, there is a range of protagonists. These individuals are drawn from not just the classroom, but also outside of it as their role is in a mentoring programme not as permanent residents of a classroom. I do not write so inclusively of mentors as their impermanence in this room neither allows for reflection upon their experiences nor is it a focus of my thesis.

I commence with myself but we have already met as you have heard my voice in text I have written which has made me a part of your world. I am storyteller but I will offer you greater insight into my being in Chapter 8 when I speak of my Self with you. Perhaps there are similar people to the girls to whom I introduce you. My protagonists are real people and are a representative sample of students. I respect their anonymity and thus have changed their names.

Marta

She is a difficult person. I can give her a background but it is one that shouts disadvantage and pessimism. I know her relations. I met them once. She is often absent from school or will absent herself during the day if she feels like it. She is a rule unto herself. Marta is confrontational and angry—most adult interactions are interspersed with swearing and shouting. Her classroom peers reject her and try to ignore her. She has very low literacy and numeracy levels and appears to be of low ability. She shows no trust in other people and intends to operate in a way that is based around how she feels at that instant. Calling her to account is pointless, as she does not seem to recognise accountability as a term to be associated with her. I think I might leave it at that.

Georgia

Ah yes! Do I know Georgia? I most certainly do! She is a very obvious presence. She is a leader in that she can easily set the tone for a whole class. Her demands are such that to ignore is to imperil the atmosphere.

A rather spoiled girl, Georgia is inclined to flaunt her physical Self by wearing low tops and short skirts. This is another aspect of her presence that demands attention from all onlookers!

She has a nature that is sweet, especially if she wants things her way. I don't believe that Georgia has ever paid much attention to her achievements, which are usually measured in terms of the attention she gets by whatever behaviours are being shown at that particular time.

Other class members don't trust her, as she is friendly when necessary. Her empathy is negligible and this makes others wary of her but most people are afraid to argue or cross her in case of the consequences! Georgia is not opposed to using her physical strength to gain compliance or to make a point!

Jodie

I am quite sure that everyone knows a Jodie! This friendly open-faced girl will tear into a room, sit heavily on the chair then burst into tears because someone doesn't like her today! How unfair life is today! Never again will she speak to that person. They tell everyone about what she said on MSN and what she has said on MySpace was now the topic on everyone's lips!

Oh dear Jodie! Everybody knows when the day does not belong to Jodie.

When the sun shines, though, the whole classroom is alight as her smiles dominate the room and her happy laughter reigns supreme. Then she works with her group and they achieve wonderful things. Then down comes the rain and away we go again, into the dark turmoil of the female adolescent mind, churning through the whirlpools of relationships and what the boys are saying. With handfuls of potato chips being crunched endlessly, the whole story of how Justin hates her and what he has said and that he has called her fat come pouring out.

Yes, we all know Jodie.

Classroom Landscape

Reflection

I am coming in daily to fix this room, a converted Science laboratory. I don't care. I have a room that is for us and everyone else cannot easily access it, unless, of course, someone leaves the external doors unlocked! That's ok. One thing I loathe about classrooms is the drab and dull presentation—grey walls. I am lucky this year as I have a carpet on the floor and can choose the colour of the chairs to be used—red, green or grey! I reject the red chair for its connotations of commonality throughout the whole school and select green. Walls are horrible but there is only so far I can go with funding. I get the bright green and bright pink hessian out of my own funds and cover the huge display areas. It is looking like most of this has to be out of my own funds as the school might allow me to run this programme but I do not think they mean to actually provide funding! I like the look of the bright colour and it makes the room seem almost interesting. I seek out books on girls and empowerment. I organise desks for an initial set up. I know what is in the curriculum and what needs to happen with that. I am feeling rebellious however as I know that the most important thing I will do this year is to bring self-belief to many of these girls. I will introduce confidence and support. I will encourage them to want to be involved in whatever is going on—this then is not just about the curriculum, designed by faceless people who believe that this is of most value to students. I want them to enjoy being in this room. I want them to feel inspired and welcome. I know how things need to be.

Wise Teacher

A teacher brings so much into a room. Not only does she bring experience and knowledge, but also she brings understanding, awareness, tolerance and caring. When I walk into the room, I have intentionality towards objects and people. I have understandings of how things will be, their purpose and their interrelationships. Nothing stands alone within this room. What a teacher does with a curriculum depends so much on how she will translate and moderate and how she will expose and hide—she is *phronimos*, a wise teacher. Wisdom dictates her mode of operation as she begins to understand her students. It is this knowledge that will offer her ways of teaching by suggesting varying strategies and paths.

A good teacher will bring into the classroom laughter and a feeling of comfort. By colouring the walls and attempting to change the room into something different, she brings novelty and a notion that she cares how this room will be for her students. She will encourage students to design the room furniture and other things as time goes by.

She understands that it is not just the students she is responsible for as she also is responsible for bringing parents and carers into what is happening in this classroom. It is to make the room a community. Initially it is supposed that there is a strong level of interest by all parents and carers as they have elected to have their daughters in this class.

Just Us Girls – A Mentoring Programme for Adolescent Girls

Reflection

A classroom is just that—a classroom unless something is done to change the atmosphere and environment. I have a class of twenty-four girls, two have removed themselves by this stage, and I am looking for ways to bring their community awareness to the fore. I want my girls to be part of a community and part of networks.

Building the Programme

I want the girls to meet strong young women who are developing their own ways of being. I want them to see what is possible for females to do. How do I do this? How much time do I have? Is this realistic? Who will help me? I need people who are in the community, not in schools; I need people who understand what I mean when I talk of positive role models for young girls. We don't need beauty therapists; we don't need to know how to be pretty! We need to know how to make use of who we are; how to expand and explore what we have. Ideas flow through my mind.

Walking with Mentors

Mentoring, historically, has been a process whereby one person is the “guide” and one is the guided. It is about developing a relationship based around trust and respect. Katarina Lucas implemented a mentoring programme, of which she writes in her book, *Walk With Me*, in which she alludes to the number of mentoring relationships that have been built, in a variety of situations for youth, together with a significant adult and these youth have gone on to lead successful lives (Lucas, 2008, p. 22). She focuses on the level of a supportive relationship and the positive long-

term outcomes. Her mention of the *Big Brothers/ Big Sisters mentoring programme* is done in reference to the long-term success of this programme, which was based around relationship building.

A mentoring process can be used to expose girls to a range of possibilities—vocational and personal—that will expand horizons and build their confidence. I feel that a mix of the developmental and the prescriptive will enable the mentoring process. This is because it is not always easy for adolescent girls and a stranger to immediately know where to begin a relationship building. I felt that by providing a vocationally based focus or an interest-based focus, that the whole process would be easier for all stakeholders.

Reflection

Firstly, I loved the name. It was almost like answering the question, “Who’s there?” and this wonderful secret giggle sounds from behind the door of secrecy and mystery, “Just us girls!” It proclaims innocence; it sounds so mild; it deceives; it captivates; it beckons the inquirer to unlock that door and see. What makes this even more enigmatic is that we know who girls are. So, in my mind, I have an image of girls and it is this vision that urges me to do this, to create a programme for girls and for young women. So I do and I did.

Women Tasmania (a government funded organisation designed to promote women in the community) immediately embraced the notion of a mentoring programme for girls. The young women who I want the girls to work with are in the community and we proceed to draw a list of names of possibilities.

I notify the senior staff. This is disappointing as the only comments made are that there is no funding to cover this programme. Fortunately Women Tasmania has some funding for programmes such as this and I am able to access it.

Carefully structured plans have to be presented to the leadership team. I write a rationale and a proposal that is read by this team composed of all persons in administrative roles within the school—this implies all senior staff. After this formal process, I return to what was achieved, enjoyed and celebrated during our *Just Us Girls Mentoring programme*.

Dancing with Girls

Now I return to what happened in 2007. I bring into attention a personal note, as I feel very emotionally involved with this programme, which I designed and implemented.

In the 2007 project, there were inspiring achievements. The official report has had all emotion removed and thus does not convey the stories of girls as they went through these eight weeks.

It was wonderful—it embraced all that I had envisaged for Grade Eight girls so that they might dare to do and dare to be. From their ardent wishes of what they saw as little dreams erupted volcanoes of achievement.

Four girls wanted to dance but they never had had the chance—they danced;

Two girls wanted to sing but had been told that they couldn't—they sang solos;

Three girls of awkwardness wanted to do circus tricks—they walked as clowns on stilts;

Four girls had a strong community conscience and wanted to help others—they raised money against World Poverty for the Oaktree Foundation and bought a goat

for a village, then went on to approach a Victorian company about providing Tasmanian High School with a well-being programme for Grade Eight Boys and Girls;

Two girls wished to write but didn't know where to start— their journalist mentor took them for breakfasts and let them write an article.

At our final afternoon, all parents, brothers sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents are invited to come and celebrate with our girls. It is an afternoon tea and a performance for all to be part of. I want the girls' carers to see what mentoring and an all-girls class has meant for them.

I write of the emotion shown by proud parents and the joy of proud girls and I talk of tears on faces of parents and planners but do we all share an understanding of an intensity that was present during our programme?

I am disappointed though. Not one of the invited senior staff came, not even the Principal. I tell you this, as I want to show how hard it is to do something different—to do something that does not fit with political guidelines but is, instead, a response to needs of students. Showing how well girls can do when operating without boys was for us to celebrate and for us to know.

The success of *Just Us Girls* is that girls took their visions and made them real. This is how we could be teaching our girls. When we look at the world or possibilities, we must not say, "we cannot", we must not say, "Someone won't let us". We must say, "we can" and when and how.

Bureaucracy Takes Control

I now show you what happened in the following year as the programme became a functional arm of a funding body. I see that bureaucracy removes the heart and replaces it with quantifiable data. Desire, blood and passion were absent. By this very absence, the presence exposes a certain hard reality of the need to rationalise education through empirical data. I have little to do with it as I am teaching most of the time, and the school administration has changed my teaching status, thus removing me from any chance to participate in my programme. It becomes the project for *Guaranteeing Futures*, a vocationally based government funded programme. If we observe *Just Us Girls* in an objective manner, take a natural attitude and remove a story of phenomena, phenomenological understanding, then we might see that operationally it is smoothly run and funding flows.

Even as I write, I lose my vision of mentoring for girls, building their power, showing them ways of being and applauding each and every one. I feel as if the project is being moved away from me, at the end of the year. This is nothing related to my personal ego but it is to do with my vision of what I am trying to create. Even though I feel uncomfortable about it, I accept and cooperate. Hindsight allows me to see that, in order to get money, it is necessary to acquiesce to the funder's wishes. The Cradle Coast Authority had a mandate to create programmes with a "futures" focus and my project fills the bill easily. In order for them to be able to report against certain requirements, the project has to comply with those requirements and these are aimed at Grade Ten students, not Grade Eight. Also, as *Guaranteeing Futures* was a vocationally based governmentally funded programme, the mentoring project is required to become more focused on vocations. While they control the money, they

create the project. Tasmanian High School will not put any money into the programme at all. Also there is no time allowance either. The reluctance of the school to work with the community might be interpreted as lacking in vision and understanding of the purpose of such programmes. At times, I can see that the school administration is actively discouraging mentors and the programme through small ways such as refusing to allow the mentors to access students at prearranged times.

So, we might ask just why *Just Us Girls* became a watery version of its initial design. I believe that I perhaps was unable to convey clearly how this vision of a future for girls might deeply impact upon their being. I also suspect that there was a degree of who “owns” this programme, with Cradle Coast Authority, as the funder, claiming the right to ownership and Tasmanian High School administration objecting to the interference by outside bodies while refusing to acknowledge the funding source as the giver of rules! I do not think I even stood anywhere in relation to this.

I would like to say that I changed the world! Outcomes of this programme are that parents want an all-girls class in Grade Nine. School planning did not allow for me to take this programme and my programme is given to someone who has not researched or investigated educating girls.

I do not think it ever happened again there at that school. I have never been asked for any information regarding its success or otherwise and I believe that very little interest has ever been demonstrated by the school.

My information and my extended data come to me in the form of poetry from girls I taught.

Strong Poets

Poetry is a profoundly powerful technique of literary expression. Barone talks of a “strong poet” as one who positions herself in a social world of reality, she is a social being, a moral agent and she is a human being. This linguistic mode of intensely personal expression is my heading because, as each girl’s words are read, there can be seen an aestheticism, a reality of expression and a grounding of deep trust that enables each one to express their unique way of viewing her own experience in a girls’ class with me (Barone, 2000, p. 125).

I write to the girls. They respond with colour of text and voice.

Liz Ryan

Northfield High School

Hi Girls,

I do hope all is well for you and I am quite aware that very soon you will be finishing your final year of high school. I think of you all and I wish you all the best for your coming years.... you were a great group of people and I really enjoyed teaching you.

Now for the crunch! I was hoping that you might email me regarding your thoughts on the all girls' class that we had. After having been two more years along, you can now look at these questions (I hope).

Did you see any benefits of being in that class?

What were they?

If you didn't see any benefits can you tell me what you saw as not so good?

Do you feel that girls of that age benefit from being in a class such as that?

The reason I am asking now is that not only are you all about to leave school and head off in your own directions, but I am drawing close to the time when my thesis is due and I need some

comments from you as they will make a huge difference to how I write. I do hope you can find the time to write... doesn't have to be an essay!!!!Your answers will be used in my thesis but I will not put your names in there... privacy! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Liz Ryan

Hey Ms Ryan, great to hear from you!

I really enjoyed my two years spent in an all girls class.

It's a bit of an understatement to say that at this age, boys are a bit distracting.

Not only are they immature and distracting in class, but they also occupy our minds.

So, for me it was easier to lean in this environment.

And i made new friends, but co-ed class or single sex class, that was inevitable.]

Thanks for everything.xxxxxx

Heyy Ms Ryan.

i am writtin bak to you about the all girls class you had in grade 8.

yes some of the benefits in that class was to get along with everyone and to leave to me young women and not young teenages that played up. always had help there for you. but the good thing was that in an all girls class we had people come in and tell us alot of things about different jobs and things women did in there life. i liked it when we have out mentors come in and do different stuff with us.

girls that age who are in class like that will get a lesson out of it and

to act some much more grown up. most of the girls in the have changed heaps and its a good thing.

xxxxxxx

Hey hope you are doing well i had a great time in the all girls class and i miss being in one now i found that being in an all girls class was not stressful at all. Being in an all girls class really helped me make friends or else i wouldn't have the friends i have now. Thanks for everything i had a really good time in your class.

From xxxxx

Ms Ryan

Hello. Hope you're good.

The answers to your questions;

Did you see any benefits of being in that class? I do think there was a benefit for being in the all girls' class.

What were they? Being confident and proud of what I did. Being able

to stand up for my beliefs and how I felt without feeling that the entire spotlight had to be on the boys.

Do you feel that girls of that age benefit from being in a class such as that? Yes it helps a lot with issues like fighting for boy's attention and will help push us further in our lives knowing we can do anything we put our minds to.

Xxxxxxx

i enjoyed the all girls class, i think it was alot easier to concentrate on work and getting things completed. because boys often are loud and distract the class. I have learnt more things in the grade 8 class then i have any other class, because you kept pushing us till we had our work finished, and it encouraged me to try harder and get work completed. how you are well, miss seeing you around the school

Hi... hows things? yes every thing is all going welll. thanks

Yes i throught it was good to have a all girls class because

You was able to have those talks that you really cant talk around boys.

You didn't have any competition to try to

impress the boys..

You didn't have those bag out comments from the boys

You could do more work in that class. as where if you was in a mix classs you really cant do much

Yes i think girls that age will benefit from being in that class

well i hope i have help you

out... :) xxxxxxx

i feel that i benefited from the all girls class because there wasn't as many distractions an also a group of girls work well togeather i felt that i could relate to work with a group of girls rather then a group of mixed.

i do feel that girls of that age beifit from the all girls group because theres no boys to distract them and also its easy for most girls to relate to other females.i wish that i could have been in an all girls class for my last year.

hi yes from what i done in the all girls was awsom fun it gave me the chance to really come out and show people who i was as a prefomer and not be so how could you say agresive it brought a kinda side of me out. i loved working in groups like this the benifits are great i have done a number of live gigs and am loving it... im getting a band together

and hopefull presue my dream of being a performer

Hey! It's been so long since i talked to you. I totally saw you the other day. Wish you were still at parklands, the leavers dinner is only 3 weeks away now, very exceting!!

benefits: We were all the same, there was no boy girl compettition, the maturity level was higher than the boys but most of all a great teacher! who was actually willing to help us and listen. It made the world of difference!

The biggest no good thing i can recall was the narky behaviour between the girls, a few arguements ('Catfights') but nothing that couldn't be soughted out.

Yes i think it was good being in the class, i think the grade that we did it in was ideal, as you get older i don't think keeping the separation of the sexes is a good idea as we do need to learn to associate appropriately. Grade 7 and 8 would be the best years to do an all girls class, coming into high school is a a big change so having a same sex class to come into and be supported in would make that transition from primary to high school alot smoother and easier to cope

with. so we didn't get annoyed,
our problems were similar and it
gave us a chance to share
experiences and help each other
out without feeling like we were
going to be judged by the
opposite sex. There were many
great memories from that class
ones that won't be forgotten,
good times great girls but most
of all a great teacher! who was
actually willing to help us and
listen. It made the world of
difference!

The biggest no good thing i can
recall was the narky behaviour
between the girls, a few
arguments ('Catfights') but
nothing that couldn't be sought
out.

hope thats what you needed. if
you have anymore questions i'll
be happy to answer them!

hope everythings going well with
you.. good luck with your
thesis!! :)

Much Love xxxx

XXXXXXXXXX

This strong poetry retains its strength through the message of identification that has
been sent. I know which poet wrote which piece by her words and her unique voice.

Reflective Memories

And so I move us into the present, into a time and space where I reflect upon what
happened, what the currents were that flowed through everything and I draw out a

more profound comprehension than I held previously within my naïve understanding and presentation of that classroom. I reflect upon the temporal and spatial reality of these life worlds—girls, teacher and those senior staff who led me to contemplate the political functioning of hierarchy and power within education.

I remember this time and the students who populated the spaces. I have kept this memory within my brain, stored and waiting for re-emergence into the present where I begin my writing. As I remember, I think of different things—perceptions, emotions, and images. There is a combination of remembered perceptions that are seated within my Self.

I was in a classroom with these girls. There was a reason for being there. It was neither a random action nor an unplanned occurrence. It did not just happen in isolation. It was planned.

As a human being, I have ways of dealing with my life world and the life worlds of others. I am present in the world and, as would be expected, it is through my eyes, as visual receptors and with my brain as neural translator that I begin my long process of reflection. I have the luxury of language and syntax so I am not left, alone, with just my mental images and imaginings.

My presence in this classroom is my direct personal experience of the events and the girls. It is my reception of actions and behaviours as I am making meaning of what is happening. Sokolowski creates a physiological image of this as he speaks of the involvement of our bodies in a temporal space, as it is only through this that our embodied Self can begin reflection. Thus, as one, it is I, present, here and now. I cannot know of anyone else's perceptions unless they draw on language to engage me in a shared perceptual experience but this is not what was happening. I cannot

remember their memories. I can only know what they have shared with me and what they allow me to know of them (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 232). It is through their voices that I come to understand their narratives.

As it is I who is remembering this, it is also through my lens that I see and speak. Can I talk in other ways, of how others think? I do not believe this is possible as these perceptions and experiences belong to an individual. So, colour my memory with time, but know that experience and reflection might clear my lens for others so they might share understandings with me.

Through my language it is I who is declaring and I am using language to grow my understandings as I process the information that has been given to me.

I might look at this room, in which I spent 2007, and consider those who were present and the life worlds that encompass their beings. I might consider my own, as it was then. I think of my body, and the bodies of my students, in a space in a time removed. As human beings we react and respond to other humans in so many ways. Within this room were diverse identities present in a contrived situation of education, relating and reacting with other human beings. It is a wondrous thing when these things present themselves to us.

Can I leave this at mere presentation? I can provide a propositional reflection but this does not account for manifolds of human beings and human experience. It is my phenomenological reflection that will build depth and meaning. Without that, my classroom remains just that—a classroom in a public high school in Tasmania with female students.

Moments and meanings become unlocked as I consider historicity and presence within layers of architecture and a red chair. I expose environmental conditions of

classrooms and educational weaponry. Why have we come to this? Why must I have a class for girls and mentors for girls? Is this a flight of fancy or a reality?

I share what I have. I have mentioned words in this section that might not be familiar ones but I wanted to tantalize and ask,” What do you make of this situation and these words? Do they have meaning for you?”

Contextualised considerations enable some clarity, but it is with the current information that such understandings are begun. I am going to build you a phenomenological structure of school, as I believe that this is what you want of me. When I am done, when my language has engaged and provoked, I wonder at your thoughts then. Will you have found what you can and will you have gained deeper meaning about what it means to be a girl in school?

Education is an institution and a part of society. I invite my reader to step forward and consider what societal influences might come to light as I consider notions of gender and language within the Symbolic Order.

Chapter 3: Symbolising of Woman in Society

The register of the symbolic is a complex network of linguistic and cultural signs, a chain of signification that makes sense of the world and our position within it. The chain is not just a series of links, with one signifier depending on another, but is also a containment that defines where a person stands within the Symbolic Order. The Symbolic Order operates in language and for Lacan the subject can be seen in an important respect as an effect of language rather than its cause. The anteriority of the symbolic means that we are subjected to it in two senses: first born into it, we are obliged, coerced to acquire through language our sense of who we are: second, we are given our very subjecthood in this way. It is language and the Symbolic Order more generally that bestows subjecthood upon us. Slavoj Zizek

Language, as the primary symbolic order through which we interpret the world, is a familiar idea and it can be taken as a given background of vocal and textual signification. Language does not exist only in the semantic. Cavarero (2005, p. 133) speaks of understanding the importance of voice as an embodiment of existence. This is a world in which I am present. My consciousness is embodied and present. I give voice to this embodiment as I announce, “I am”. I am present (van Manen, 1990, p. 57). Should I be alone, it might be a silent announcement, heard by no other but intuited by myself. My symbol is “I”, my consciousness, me, is present in a body. As I announce this to a world, it is making known, with certainty that I am here but as yet I have not given syntax to my location. Is it voice alone that proclaims my uniqueness, my “I”? Do I need a location? I can stand, geographically, and make reference to that point of latitude and longitude, thus telling of where I am as in a

GPS reading. An absence of this might cause me to state where my body is standing in relation to another body. Immediately, I make reference to another present in this world entity, be it animate or inanimate. I am beginning now to hold a positioned presence in this world by declaring a relationship to another object or person. I can speak about an old man who is standing to my right. Not only have I given him geographical status, but I have also applied symbols to him that allow another to create meaning regarding this other person. By assigning him an age, a human being can make certain assumptions regarding chronological age and assign him characteristics of oldness. As I call him old because I am younger, I am comparing him, considering appearances and I might note that he has grey hair and gnarled fingers. I might see a very lined face and few teeth. I can broaden those symbols by developing a greater network of understanding through syntax. He has few teeth, as he is unable to afford dental care so he could be poor. His hands are gnarled as he has worked in manual labour all his life. I announce the subjecthood (Myers, 2003, p. 12) of this man, using a range of symbols and I ascribe meaningful layers to this man so that others might view him through my lens as I wish him to be seen. Should I hold age to be revered, I select symbols that consign respect and reverence, thus changing the concept of age. Language is dynamic and I move it and twist it to consign or remove meaning. I understand what value this man might hold within the Symbolic Order. His manual labour, his poverty assigns him to a lowly position on the order hierarchy of social status. His maleness, however, countenances an interpretation based purely upon gender, but one that apportions higher status than it would for a poor, toothless woman. Ann Weatherall, in her book, *Gender, Language and Discourse*, speaks of the ways we gender our language and she examines how this happens and how it appears in what is said and done. I speak with an

understanding that our world, is linguistically supported as one of a patriarchal order whereby an assumption is made that language is inherently gender definitive with man being a default terminology used across many linguistic transactions (Weatherall, 2002, p. 2) Via our understandings of language, where patriarchy is a signifier it is possible to find belonging in a position in the Symbolic Order—we can be contained within this order through linguistic signifiers as enforcers of a Symbolic Order.

From Female To Girl: Gendered Humans

A baby lies *in utero*; it is not known whether it has ovaries or testes, as I do not seek knowledge through ultrasound. I name this organism as a baby, which highlights accompanying concepts of what a baby is. A baby is born. It will, usually, either have ovaries or testes. Does gender then become an issue as to whether female or male is nature or nurture? In his book, *Gender, Nature and Nurture*, Frank Lippa explores these ideas and he leads me to understand that sex is present but gender is applied to this baby through socialised signifiers of objects and language(2002, p. 136).

Why must people be identified as male or female? Why must a little female baby have a bow in her non-existent hair while her little male baby friend wears a football striped or blue jumpsuit. Immediately, I know which is the boy and which is the girl. Do I need to know? Why is it important to be able to categorise, qualify or identify by gender? Surely, the baby is just a baby? If I know that one is a male and the other a female, will I then seek to treat them differently? Will I speak differently to one? Will I handle one in a different way? Will I confer a gender identity upon them through my actions? Research does indicate that this is actually the case. Once a

baby is identified as a male or a female, then the female child will be spoken to more and handled more softly (Lippa, 2002, p. 199). Let our babies grow a little and we find that identities are more strongly confirmed. Presents for boys and girls differ—I did give my son a doll and he was slightly interested but no more than in any other toy.

Through an assigning of gender, there begins a lifelong process of placement and confinement into the Symbolic Order, as it is there that we take our place within the community of fellow human beings. For Žižek, the Symbolic Order is a place of signification where, as human beings, with language, we are giving sense and meaning of our worlds and learn where we are, our place (in Myer, 2003, p.22). I suspect that gender is construed as a vital part of an assignment process as it allows for other to understand status of an organism in relation to other events, situations, objects, and beings and as a result, it becomes understood as to how this corporeal presence in space and time, is to be related to—structures of behaviour and language prevail as an organism becomes a member of society.

I think of the words we use and wonder why we give certain meaning in particular contexts. Initially my thoughts are on the meaning of man and woman, or should I say woman and man. With what power do we imbue our words? Where might this need to confer power through language come from? What difference does it make in our world? When an individual moves into a social order, a class of being, language assigns duties and tasks, modes of communication and behaviours. It confers opportunity and rights. Language might be an enforcer of order and controller of deviant activity.

Žižek discusses the Real as it sits in the Void, waiting for a conferring of symbols that will assign ways of being to the subject. Žižek says that the Real exists and

persists regardless of the conferring of the Symbolic. I understand this: a being is still just that, with no signifiers attached but it persists in existence as it is. To bring meaning to the Real invites language to be associated with it and this is where the Symbolic Order is. Importantly it is the means by which these two integrate that brings meaning (Myers, 2003; Sheehan, 2012). This is exactly like when the Mommy saw the mountain in a scene from the book *Choke*, by the American author Chuck Palahniuk (mentioned in Myers, 2003, p 25). She saw it, as it was, with no other description, no politicisation, no geology, no ownership, nothing else—she saw it just as I see students in a classroom in a pre-symbolic state. So, as a baby is unknown but it exists (the Real) and has no attached symbolic meaning as a person, it is in the Void, but birth confirms it as a subject through attaching gender symbols to it

I am enthralled by the power of language and I wonder why woman and man, as just words, produce such polarised positions within our society and also I seek to come to understand why this might be.

Societal Historicity of Woven Text

My reading introduces thoughts of a complexity of origin of the embodied human. In a convoluted and complex manner, I find that I actually need to begin by considering my thoughts on woman's current status and role models for girls who are moving into womanhood. To understand that I retrace my steps and gaze at societal arrangements, as I know them, where they come from and what influences socialisation of female gender and male gender. I search across a number of authors and all seem to have similar leanings as they suggest that gender is a way by which socialised meaning might be directed towards humans (Sheets-Johnston, 1994;

Alcorff, 2006; Reeves-Sanday & Goodenough, 1990). Even thinking of this notion seems to be too enormous but, undertaken step-by-step, it might be possible to construct a background for inhabitants of education in the 21st century.

When I was born, I was allotted a space in my family and their social sphere. This spatial allotment appears to occur as a result of many things. Historicity of family and society appear to be vital in providing infrastructure for current being. Therefore, I take you back into the past, so we might share commonality of thought regarding types of people and families who came to Tasmania from European countries—their historicity and narrative.

Australia is a new country when considering European settlement but one of the most ancient in geological terms. Human settlement is supposed to be around 40,000 – 70,000 years ago and European settlement only two hundred years ago.

It is with European settlement that I travel as my ancestors came out here on the First Fleet. Jacob was a convict of French origins and he arrived with his English convict wife. On the other side there was a Scottish man and woman, poor crofters, but also, there were English origins, South African and British Indian. I can claim Welsh and Irish and like many others, perhaps I can trace back to a Viking on the coast of Scotland. The French man came from the persecuted Huguenots and may have been a silk weaver in the town of Uzès in Languedoc, France. In turn this might be traced back to the Cathars and further. Historically, then, I am of European descent as are many of the earlier white people who came to Australia. Fact one then infers that my roots could be Germanic, Viking, and Celt and the language of these people is the base of our current English language.

These societies had their own traditions and ways of being for men and women. I do not intend to go into depth with this as that is not my focus but I am beginning to put a little colour into the background of my society. Jenny Jochens, (1995) discusses the position of women in Old Norse Society. It is not favourable and few women feature as powerful people. Their lives were governed by their weaving at home and a masculine ruling group applied rules to them. The advent of Christianity did little to improve their lot, as with a male dominated institution such as the Christian religion, there seemed to be little room for women except as the bringers of sin to the spiritual life of men. This is an interesting and misogynist concept later philosophically expounded by Otto Weininger, an Austrian philosopher who died at 23, as discussed by Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 17). Zizek acknowledges Weininger as extreme in his attitude towards women but I wonder why he is even recognised as a possible philosopher as his age might be considered to prohibit any experiential accruing of wisdom and he seems to embrace a limited understanding of humanity. Again, I am being brief as the history of women is not my focus. Women's existence was contingent upon men but it is their weaving and spinning that built unspoken texts regarding lives of women (Allen, 2003, p. 23), and mute tapestries of life worlds of women in old Norse society. I am unable to hold the consideration that conditions for women in Viking times are irrelevant to this. I consider stories of bygone times and how, as living linguistic beings, we read and absorb words, language, images revealing man and woman, and stories as divulged to us.

I understand history as a series of stories about men and how men relate to the world as this is the history that I have been exposed to. In history, I find that even though the world is huge and it is impossible to have everybody's story included, in our society it becomes clear that stories of value are stories of men. I have irregular

images of female persons within history but they are few—Florence Nightingale, Catherine the Great of Russia, Catherine de Medici, Caroline Chisholm—either nurse or nightmare.

Christianity emerges as an axis of Western society of which Australia is a part (Jaspers, 1964, p. 135). Religion, with all its tendrils, snaking through intimate lives, insinuating itself into ways of being, punishes those who stray from righteousness and the ruling order. Christianity, with all its symbolism, continues to prevail as an ultimate presentation of truth, with its interpretations operational within the social order and standing as a Big Other, the fabric of socially defined knowledge and the set of rules governing our behaviour and speech (Sheehan, 2012, p. 16). Incited fear of hellfire can still be heard as echoes of policing the unruly, unbelievers and women.

As an extremely large institution and one of extreme influence, the Catholic faith is governed by a full male hierarchy, headed by a man and I believe it is fair to say that there is no place for women as leaders of men but they are accepted as followers as they submit to the male hierarchical structure. My knowledge and experience of religion is one where men are in charge and I assume that it might be their rules that construct language and behaviours of religion. I consider that the historicity of religion and its influence on society presents notions of a very powerful Symbolic Order.

Voices of Symbolic Order

I believe an Archbishop has status that is high within religious orders of the Anglican Church and, thus, might be considered a leader and a setter of standards. Within the

last year Archbishop Peter Jensen of Sydney exposed his views upon how a wife should be, in relation to her husband—how a woman should be in relation to man.

According to Sydney's Anglican Church perhaps they should do. The Church has suggested a new wedding vow that asks the bride if she will "honour and submit" to her husband, as "the church submits to Christ."

"In the last three or four decades a certain egalitarianism has crept into society and the way people think and I understand that's the reigning philosophy," he told ABC television.

"I just happen to think it's wrong, unhelpful, and in the end we will find it's better to recognise that men and women are different, that we have at certain points different responsibilities and men will be better men if we acknowledge that."

(men-and-women-are-different-and-so should-their-marriage-vows, 2012)

Language? Are these words not absurd? Do Archbishop Jensen's words really illustrate an entitlement by the Symbolic Order, with its designations of power and ability to linguistically gift reality to someone? Does not the word submit, as applied to woman, immediately revoke her power of being by giving her embodied Self to man? Is this still an inherent and mightily embedded philosophy within our society? If these accepted norms prevail in a society, I ask then, what does this tell us about the status of a woman?

Symbols of Woman

Society has ways of engendering conformity. It would seem to be easy to condemn one to otherness—to announce the presence of difference through absence of sameness, and to lead further to otherness because of lack of success or status. To men, it might seem that women are Other, as, for example, Archbishop Jensen

explicitly says women should submit to men—the Big Other. The Big Other, I see as the powerful Other within our society whose influence is incontestable. My understanding of such an expectation and my understanding of language, lead me to see that men gaze down on women, whose bodily supplication of submission infers being below man thus enabling the visual image of lower body in submissive stance, a corporeal presence. Should we encompass the whole of humanity, with reference to human only, and allow for sex differences between male and female, then perhaps all of us would know that we are human and identify as such. Differences of sex would apply to procreation but roles would not be assigned according to gender. Language, as a human device to confer gender identity, is a complex transactional currency between individuals and society. It appears to be socially internalised and highly influential in societal structure and interactive interfaces (Weatherall, 2002, p.102). Should gender identity become superfluous to our linguistic semantics, it might happen that there would occur a more gender-neutral situation with syntax as applied to woman and man showing an equal distribution of human value. Man would not be default terminology. Recently, in Sweden there was news about attaining gender neutrality through the introduction of a pronoun, *hen*, which denotes neither male nor female but might be equally applied. Human as being becomes more important than gender identification and thus, individuals might grow and come into being as human not as a male or female, not as a gendered identity.

Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 41) discusses the modification of Self and I lead further into exploring a notion that a gendered Self, an identity construct, could take control of how it, a Self, might be. Subjectivisation is a conference of identity upon an individual before it understands its Self (Myers, 2003, p. 46). I have an image of a subject waiting in the wings, as before one goes on stage or, as Zizek discusses, in

the Void. I consider a gender identity, complete with constraints or freedoms associated with gender symbols, as present in a society. Self is able to change or modify how it accepts these symbols. Consider that each embodied Self has voice and with voice each unique being is able to use language. To bring thought and being into this world through language actually might confer a power upon a Self to make its own pronouncements of identity. The power of the phonic and the semantic, for a being, might still be limited by the Symbolic Order as there are human matters of acceptance as social beings and, thus, an external Other might still have an overwhelming impact. I suggest a currency is associated with how one comes into presence and subjectivisation is rewarded or policed through the Big Other. For this individual, subjectivisation occurs as an assertive introduction of a subjectified Self enters societal order as a valuable Self. Revision of subject is not contingent upon confinement to particular orders or by language (Myers, 2003, p. 46). Syntactical extension of language and building with metaphor construes extensive meaning and thus enhances opportunity for reward or punishment. Gender identity, as our social contract and currency, is carried into subjectivisation through language, a bestowal of being by society.

Language confuses me. I am told that to speak of man is to speak of humans. Humans are composed of a diverse range of ways of being but physiological difference is usually obvious when a human will have either ovaries or testes. I will call this sex difference. It is not gender difference. If so, when I say that man is made of man and woman, of what am I speaking? How can one word, man, mean the same as man, the gendered form of human? If man, then, means all human kind, why does woman come under this concept? Is not a woman a female human? Is not a man a male human? Is not humanity composed of males and females, women and men? To

seek understanding of humanity should not expose gender as a means of determining a subject's being. To understand what it is to be human is to remain with the language of human as signified understandings of woman and man, immediately confers a standing within the Symbolic Order, within society.

I suggest this thought as a lead into how we might use language to support the notion of men as the main kind of human, and women as a lesser form of man; man as default human. Weatherall (2002, p. 85) speaks of gender identity as social, one that enables humans to partake of interactions as identifiable beings, genders, thus enabling all participants to understand the norms and mores associated with this particular interface. When I speak in social relationships, I speak as a woman as this is my historicity as an identifiable female human. I am not man. I am human but gender, assigned to me on the basis of my physiology, associates woman symbols and syntax with me.

Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 58) discuss the presence of a community of practice where, as linguistic beings, we practice our language and language norms within a community. Through this we might learn acceptable otherwise modes of being. Maybe I need to learn how to pronounce a word in a communally acceptable way—it makes me more tolerable to the social norm. I take this further then and refer to the constraints that society places upon our thoughts and actions as we follow and enact our historicity. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet in the book *Language and Gender*, (2003, p. 55) suggest that gender is performed in the most minute and the most extreme ways within society. *Nano-moments* of linguistic gender bias become integral to gender performance and deployment in our society and this language engagement with society is inherent in our operations and conformity to gender performance.

Does the duality of nature denote that human, as nature, is made of man and woman; masculine and feminine? How can man, who I have already said is nature, have a duality? It has been commonly accepted in philosophical and theological writings, that man means all human beings. Karl Jaspers' book, *Way to Wisdom* (1951) makes not one reference to woman or female and as such, I had difficulty accommodating what most people consider as great wisdom. Every reference to humanity is as "man". Why do we not have "woman" to mean all human beings.

I say the word man, and the image in my mind is not one of women interspersed with men. If I say man, I think immediately of a gendered masculine human being, not a gender neutral one. I suppose that this being will have testes not ovaries. I use the word man often enough and apply it to the masculine human. If I want to use a collective term, I use "human". To be part of a community of practice, girls might come to understand man as a linguistic term conferring superior status together with syntactical notions of exclusiveness and gender bias. Language signifier of "woman" exposes all presuppositions and assumptions and might align woman with less economic and financial power. If I consider the term "man", I see positional power in relation to woman.

Should I use the term "philosopher", I will then distinguish that from women philosophers. So this then implies a difference between philosophers and women philosophers. It is so when I refer to doctors, lawyers, and dentists—I claim the sex that has historically been disallowed from being part of that level. Does this mean that there is a difference between the two? Between a female doctor and a doctor? One might suppose that the female doctor is a derivative of the prime doctor (man).

Thus we have a default language where man means all humans but woman is in a special category and must be marked out. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p.

244) refer to this practice as one whereby we have become used to using the term “man” as a generic term, inclusive of all. However, we must single out woman, who might be included in the generic term but she is especially marked by her sex as different, as Other, and thus carries multiple labels upon which her position in the social order can be construed. The mere notion of being singled out, marked as different from man, as a subcategory of man provokes images of a ladder, a pyramid, height, whereby one is above the other in order.

Sokolowski (2000, p. 157) discusses the complexity of language and how we attach meanings to objects, names, and things. In doing this it is possible to share understandings with other and together form a clear image, complete with a boxed structure in which to place this “word”. Thus, I box in woman and begin to imagine how I construct her containing walls. Language is a powerful mode of imprisonment if we choose to absorb and identify with specific symbols and syntax. An externalised symbolisation process complete with language of body, voice and text is highly influential in our acceptance of understanding the signifiers of woman and man.

Making Woman

As I write this, I detect my own levels of uncertainty and my own questions of Self-validation. Grown intelligent women can become enmeshed with the requirement upon women and girls to define themselves in relation to men instead of being a human being. They can form their own containment walls as the constancy of feedback alerts women to how they should and could be.

As a society there are many ways to help make the feminine and this is explored in the words of Peggy Reeves-Sanday and Ruth Goodenough in *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*. Reeves-Sanday and Goodenough (1990, p. 2) attribute Simone de Beauvoir with saying that women were not born but they were made—we are borne as a female human but we become women.

In Athens, in Ancient Greece, there was no term for female Athenians. Men had their own term, but women were called “women of Athens”. Nicole Loraux, in her essay of “The Athenian Name” (2004) discusses conditions for female Athenians who would have to be called “Atheneia” but this word is never said, as there are no female Athenians, only *Attikai gynaike* or women of Athens. History speaks to me of this being a way to subordinate women and it is done through having no language that recognises them as democratic citizens. A signifier of “women” carries its own syntactical associations and then the placement of the term “Athens”, conveys a geographical situation. My assumption is that the term “Athenian” actually denoted a democratically recognised citizen with associated rights and freedoms but these were only attributed to males of Athens. A containment of non-recognition can be very effective in disempowering human beings as, when the existence of a being is announced to a world, external signifiers can be used to ascribe status and rights within that society. Thus, it might be seen that status of women of Athens did not allow for rights and freedoms as for men of Athens.

In an essay entitled “The Politics”, Trevor Saunders (1999) tells me that Aristotle was no admirer of women and yet he is considered to be the Father of Philosophy. Does this not call into question the validity of a philosophy that originates in a misogynistic society and excludes half the human population of the world? He

explains woman's inferiority to man and that her abilities deny her any right to hold a powerful position. Aristotle soundly states that woman is inferior to man. So the Father of Philosophy ensures that this notion permeates the philosophy that is to follow—woman as inadequate, mindless and having no purpose except to support the male. Female philosophers have consistently called for an addressing of the attitudinal approach of philosophy to women. Andrea Nye, in her book *Feminism and Modern Philosophy*, makes a loud statement when she says that philosophy has barricaded itself against the female voice (2004, p. 129). Yet, as a society, philosophy is called upon to determine ways of being and the complexities of our world. Can it be that female voices, excluded from proclaiming inclusion in a world, will not be heard above the roar of masculine clamour, permeating our laws and our social fraternity? My reading of a gamut of philosophical books has exposed me to some interesting perceptions, one of which I have dared to include here. I find that very often, the language used by the philosophers excludes me and shows little appreciation for my humanity. By this I mean, that as we talk of the human condition and what it is to be human and as we confront the notion of Self and the possibilities for an authentic and autonomous Self, I believe that philosophers exclude me as they couch thoughts in language that is unsympathetic, lacking emotion and written in the default “man”. Their terminology is such that it might be meaningful or relevant for only a few in a community who understand it. To us, the Others, it excludes and thus, we might find that we are disconnected from the deliberations and contemplations of human philosophy. Here, I might say that a human story, a human narrative, composed of humans and their tale can be divulged in language that is accepting and openhearted as it encourages thoughts and we might all be able to access this as part of our human advancement (Barone, 2000, p. 155).

We have a language that is still cast in the old ideology of male before female as that gender holds greater status and importance. Many earlier writers and thinkers cited this. Aristotle believed that woman was inferior. Christianity taught the inferiority of woman. As mentioned previously, the Anglican Church of Australia is wishing now to include the vows, by a woman, to obey the husband! Is this a radical leap backwards into a more fundamental, ignorant state? Will this become reflected more greatly in our world and our society? Surely it could not be that Archbishop Jensen is reflecting the mores of society. Containment lines of placement within the Symbolic Order might be drawn through such arbitrary use of language and become a tool with manipulative potential. Enforcers of society will notice any stepping outside these lines. Ignoring the rules by which we have stability and by which each knows where they belong can be dealt with in many ways but each way will remove rewards or actively punish physically or emotionally.

A further question provokes conversation. I have to ask these questions. All the way through, I must constantly ask why. I cannot just accept passively that this is correct and right. I feel that I sit outside of the Symbolic Order, watching it attaching labels to women and men, applying gender and constantly enforcing perceived differences. Žižek affirms my questioning as *hysteria*. I am hysterical and rightly so. He says that the horror of recognising that the Symbolic Order has really been unable to mandate for female and male causes angst. They are not roles and the Symbolic does not achieve clarity as it tries to account for sexual difference. Thus, my hysteria, causes a constant questioning of the Big Other and the Symbolic Order, as I, having not been totally placed into the Symbolic Order, have retained subjectivity through my questioning and my refusal to subside into objectivity (Myers, 2003, pp. 89,90). What or who are these enforcers? It would seem to be a rather histrionic term for a

hysteric to apply to social stability yet I believe its implications and symbolic reality engages strongly with power and punishment.

The Symbolic constitutes a vast part of what we usually call reality in the impersonal framework of society, the arena in which we take our place as part of a community of fellow human beings. It is where we practice our identities and our being, where we reach for commonality of meaning and understanding and where we learn to fit and know the rules by which this installation occurs. For example, most people are inscribed in the Symbolic before they are born; because they are given a name, belong to a family, a socio-economic group, a gender, and a race (Myers, 2003, p. 22). Thus reality for a female human is inscribed through her gender as woman. I suggest that other organisers such as socio-economic group and family remain less powerful than gender. With this in mind, I would introduce the Big Other as the Symbolic patriarchal order that I am illuminating through this thesis. This order is enlivened through laws, taboos, cultural traditions and socialising structures.

What Will You Give Me?

I am now uncovering one operator of Big Other. This is the one that was absent in the days of the women in the Old Norse society. Is it any surprise that I reveal this as advertising and Media which Graeme Burton, in *Media and Society: Critical Perspectives*, speaks of as being highly influential (2005). Together they prescribe woman and feminine to a waiting world. Imagine how a conversation between these two and a real woman might look.

Woman asks, "What do you want of me?"

Media and Advertising, in chorus, reply, gleefully, " We want you to be pretty, sexy, young, available, provocative, slim!"

"And what will you give me?"

"Man will want you. You will be loved. Man will find you attractive and you will be noticed and rewarded as his gaze falls upon you. You will not need more than that as that will give you power, money and attention."

Media governs much of how we view the world and our relationship with it. Advertising is powerful, having vast amounts of money spent on capturing the market (Burton, 2005, p. 131), which, in a capitalist society, suggests that consumers be netted through whatever methods will seduce and cause monetary transactions to take place. Girls are fodder for such a market and it is no wonder we see desire to be other than we are, to have more than we have. Media anticipates and Advertising promotes a girl's insecurities and informs her of her desires as they encourage the myth of beautiful possibilities for her.

Media and Advertising chorus again, "You must have this cosmetic, that piece of clothing. If you don't you will not be beautiful and desirable. You must be beautiful and desirable so you will be wanted. Girls should be slim and beautiful and it is easy if you buy the right products."

One might easily be permitted to think that people have a greater amount of sense than to be caught up in the falsity and illusions of advertising. We know that these advertisements are unreal. I, too, am not immune to the powerful suggestions of these entities, Media and Advertising. I see a slender, athletic, tanned, slightly glowing (sweaty) body streaming across the screen, carried by Nike runners, clad in little shorts and I will know that that could never be me. Firstly I can't run, second my body shape denies any concession to slenderness and my skin burns easily in the sun. I could never be like that. But I am still seduced by possibility and fantasy.

Maybe when the young women meet up with Media and Advertising, they already have possibilities in their mind. Maybe they believe they could be like that if they dieted a little harder, sun-baked a little longer or bought some self-tanning lotion, or even had a little cosmetic job done. We look at the embodiment of beauty as our society thinks it—beauty as in the slimness of body, the fullness of lips and vulnerability in the stance.

Zizek's notions of fantasy (in Myers, 2003, p. 95) are seen as ways of teaching us what to desire and thus, these objects of beauty thrust at us are contrived and designed to make us want and “need”, and to feel insecure. Product images, produced by Advertisers, want us to believe that this is an object of our desire so when a girl wants the gaze of man, she has been told, by Media, what this means and fantasy, projected via Advertising, becomes her means of understanding.

Little girls get pretty dresses. I see that some little girls become dolls for their parents to play with and dress up. Most people will have seen the various Media shows where little girls are dressed in child versions of adult clothes and there is a simmering sexuality hinted at by a little girl singing her way across the stage, swinging her hips and pouting. Makeup hides childish beauty, and instead creates a mockery of childhood. Bra-like clothing suggests that little girls have breasts that are hidden suggestively behind material—a sexual notion as to the purpose of breasts. Simpering and simmering in sexual artifice, these girls are at the beginning of their journey into womanhood. Shops allow for “sexy” clothing to be sold to children. Sexy for whom I might ask? This is not what happens to all children, of course, and I am aware of that. The varying degree through which this hegemonic sexualisation of femininity is imposed upon children arouses my anger in defence of little humans being left as they are.

If we journey towards adolescence, there is a sudden move to create an even more sexual being. Here, the child in transition to womanhood begins an exploration of her sexuality and herself. Will she end up as a gendered Self? Might she become a sexualized Self? Or might she become her individual Self?

There is a belief system that tells girls that there is a way of being and that there is a necessity to have a boyfriend—to be in a heterosexual relationship, as that is the norm. To do that, a girl should become aware of ways of being so that she might be successful in this pursuit. Exposure to images and text, depicting scenes of an unattainable fantasy created by advertisers and product sellers, impact upon youth as understandings of what it means to be a woman and a man are forming.

Little girls, in Primary School, are asked if they have a boyfriend. It seems to be important that they do. What might the term “boyfriend” mean? This is a light question and one that could be laughed off but the constancy of questioning regarding whether there is a boyfriend does not stop at Primary School level. Throughout life women, on their own, are asked if they have a boyfriend. “Having a boyfriend,” suggests to me, that this relationship confers a legitimate and acceptable way of being for a female. It is expected that there is a relationship with one of the other sex as that is what society expects of woman and man. I see this as a legitimisation of how one becomes a “woman”, a “wife” and not undesired and unacceptable within a society that appears to confer validation upon those who perform the “right” way.

A little girl silently asks herself, "What do they want of me?"

Society shouts, "Be pretty and sexy; have a boyfriend."

She does as asked.

She has become a valid female

What makes for beauty? Is it how a person is? Is it how they appear? Emma Renold, in her book, *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities*, discusses attractiveness as a shifting concept but always contingent upon a heterosexual definition and being in a heterosexual relationship (2005, p. 43). Here Media and Advertising have fertile ground for being agents of influence (Pipher, 1994, p. 27). Mary Pipher, in her book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, presents her concerns and data that contribute to an image of uncertainty and fragility for girls as they begin the slow navigation into womanhood. How easy is it to play on the insecurity and vulnerability of the teenaged girl who is seeking validation of her self? What better way to coerce and enslave than to make the teenager a slave to the shifting parameters of beauty and validation! When validation can only be achieved through the approval of heterosexual others might not this lead to a distortion of what is needed to be attractive? If everyone else is building the same kind of attractiveness might not a girl have to develop some level of extreme? She might need to be more “girlie” or prettier. She might need to be more sexually available—whatever it is she must become more attractive to boys. So now we have the magazine that defines and controls beauty; we have the videos of music that show girls how to “be” sexy; we have movies that define what one needs to do in sex and how to react; Media also shows us how desirable girls are who are doing sexual acts for boys—they are in demand; they are defined by how sexual they are.

When they buy *Seventeen* or a similar magazine, girls buy into a belief system that says having a successful romantic relationship should take ultimate priority in their lives. Girls can achieve such a relationship, they are told, by buying the “right” products, looking the “right” way, and acting in the “right” manner. Right behaviour

follows the conventional norms governing male-female relationships. Research indicates that girls do have the ability to interpret and resist the messages that *Seventeen* sends. Yet it is unrealistic to believe that girls do not, in some way, internalise the negative messages they receive, no matter how hard they try to resist (Wray & Steele, 2002, p. 199).

So can girls resist this definition? Do they all become fraudulently sexy? Of course this does not happen to all but as human beings, it is easy to become tinged by what we see. It is almost as if there are barriers brought down as we expose our Self to a wider variety of selves and therefore broaden our definition of acceptable behaviours.

Girls grow into women. They become women who still might be unclear about what it means to be a female human. Do they become a female human or do they become a gendered human? Do they continue being a gendered human with certain behaviours and notions applied to them so they might continue to define and be defined by their own femininity?

Language provides parameters and meanings for girls and women. It is a means of entry into subjecthood. In his work, Žižek (in Myers, 2003, p. 31) brings forth how the Real and the Self stand, in the Void, waiting for the Symbolic Order to confer identity symbols and language. This symbolic application of mandated ways to be for girls and boys highlights concerns regarding the confusion of what to absorb and what to reject. As adolescents, I wonder as to how it is possible to reject something that might bring fleeting reward such as the current trend of excruciatingly high heels being worn by woman and girls, as a symbol of sophistication, all for the reward of peer admiration.

I then move into understanding the notion of how, through choice, a female will choose how to be through asking Žižek's question of *Che Vuoi*: What do you want of me (Myers, 2003, p. 93)? Answers from the Symbolic denote ways by which she might gain approval and rewards. Media and Advertising promote a reward system as images and language constantly emphasise correct and prized ways of being.

How might this relate to education? I translate all that has been spoken of into reflecting that education is a social institution. It is positioned politically as a tool of government. It sits within and surrounded by society's structures and fences demanding a compliance of being yet perpetuating an inequality. Equality denotes inequality as I see that, like night and day, it might be impossible to recognise one if there was not an opposite seated nearby. Therefore, if my aim for there to be equality in schools regardless of gender, I must assume that there is inequality. This inequality cannot be removed, regarding gender, as to be equal means that there is no difference. There is difference, however, as the physical designs of women and men can attest. Thus equality is not a possibility if there is still difference. Language has conferred an inequality as dualism proclaims this.

Freeze Frame

I sit, with the boys, in a classroom.

I want to talk to them about how they are conversing with girls. I had heard some rather elaborate discussions of how they see girls and what they would do to them.

"OK, guys, this is pretty bad, what you are saying to girls."

Immediate interruption "Look at some of them though—they put on all this makeup... and then they dress like whores". That one gets to me.

"What do you mean—they dress like whores?"

“ They wear tiny clothes and show their *tits* and *arse (sic)*...they look like they are prostitutes.”

Amazing response—

“Guys, they dress like that because they think that is what you want to see. They think that this is how you need to be”

Boys’ response is full of disgust at the fact that the girls are prepared to expose themselves so easily.

“Why don’t you say that this is what you think?”

They laugh and the comments become highly sexualised as they speak about what they could do with the girls while they are so prepared to be like this. It seems that the girls are willing to have sex—one story is told of the girl who has several of the boys in one night. She turns up to school on Monday and was, of course, subject to scorn and derision because of her willingness to comply with the boys’ wants.

Who is telling the girls that they need to be like this? Why are they feeling that they need to have sex with any of these boys? Why do they continue when they are laughed at and stories told and they are treated with no respect?

When I speak to girls about what the boys tell me, they do not really realise the effect of what they are doing. They say that they could have a boyfriend if they do whatever it might have been or what they think others want from them. Popularity means a boyfriend becomes a possibility while actually having a boyfriend heightens a girl’s popularity. I look closely at what I see of the girls. I suspect some girls have no other way of relating to boys and this is the closest they can get. I see others who do not know how to have enough respect for themselves to say what they want. Sexuality is a hidden subject in schools and yet it is one that takes up much of the time outside of school for many girls.

Society brings forth our girls into pre-determined ways of being, which are suggested by stories of human kind, religious doctrine and language structures which

are constantly reflecting and highlighting a gender bias that is irrational and unacceptable in a modern society. With all the historicity of society, girls must now forge roads and pathways in the 21st century. Each person has a voice and it is his or her sound to other worlds. Can education, an institution of society help them find their voice? Can education, through encouraging voice, bring forth *hysteria* to question the Symbolic Order strengthen human subjectivity?

Chapter 4: Educational Encounters

The only thing we can do is to make sure that there are at least opportunities within education to meet and encounter what is different, strange and other, and also that there are opportunities for our students to really respond to find their own voice, their own way of speaking. Gert Biesta

How does a voice sound as text? Why use a term such as “voice” when writing of schools and education? Voice is a use of an individual’s physiology and language. Carvarero refers to voice, as the manifestation of the unique being that is human when the human announces its *esserci*, it’s being there (2005, p. 173). It is unique as a physiological admission by an individual, as without a vocal declaration of presence another cannot hear me. It is a way whereby we announce our presence in the world and as a subject, come into the world. I begin with my own voice, which announces my thoughts and ideas to others. As dative of my world, I speak my thoughts to others who might listen. My thoughts are my taste of objects and things made manifest to me and as a unique being, I am able to announce my ways of understanding to others, I can understand others I encounter and I might comprehend what is different. Voice is in alignment with text as an understanding of narrative and weaving, of spinning of yarn, to yarn. A woman weaves words, as threads, into text (Allan, 2003, p.80) of oral renditions of things that are. I use my voice to weave my narrative so that others might hear warp and weft, textures of sound (Cavarero, 2005,

p. 97). Voice and text; text and yarn; yarn and talking are all ways of working with narrative as I write and being my phenomenological understandings regarding educational experiences. With writing, I reflect on all sides (van Manen, 1990, p 124).

Consider what it might mean if a girl finds her own voice not just in a social setting but in education and educational experiences she has. She begins to speak aloud and bring forth her Self into the sphere of others. To understand such a wild notion, I begin with presenting a view of schools in Tasmania—a government school, funded by government.

My voice, my declaration of presence begins to take on a new tone as structures and rigid walls of education begin to make themselves known to me. I walk into education and formality takes over my words. As my reader comes with me through this chapter, she will sense the change in my voice and writing style. This change shows the harsh impact of the Symbolic Order of education upon me, as a teacher, as I try to describe the system. I lapse into passive voice then I attempt to correct myself. I am inclined to let it be as an illustration of the force of the Symbolic Order on the language used to describe its function in schools.

Educational Edifices

Education, in Tasmania, takes place in schools, buildings and an area so designated to be where “education” occurs. Education happens across a range of ages. In Tasmania, we begin with a programme called *Launching into Learning*, which is for those who are aged from birth to four years of age, and can continue on being part of education, right up until we are unable to take part in this process any more. This education can happen in Secondary Colleges, University, TAFE (Technical and

Further Education) and Vocational Education. Therefore, there are many places for this to occur.

The Tasmanian Education system of formal education spans twelve years. Grades One to Six undertake their education in a Primary School; Grades Seven to Ten are in High Schools and Grades Eleven and Twelve are at Secondary Colleges. School is compulsory up until the age of seventeen. After that, education may be continued into tertiary level or a person might become employed.

Schools are predominantly heterogeneous with there being only two single sex schools in the state. Both of these schools are in Hobart—Ogilvie High School for Girls and Newtown High School for Boys.

I have shown the space where education as a socially desirable and enforced operation, happens but I now imagine a meaning of education. I am a whole being, composed of many parts and even though I choose my stance, I am influenced as a full being as no part of my Self can exist without me! I want to move inside a world of education. By inserting my Self in there, it is possible to see with my eyes and begin the process of making sense of education with a school classroom as a beginning and functional coloured seating apparatus as a dominant phenomena.

A Red Chair Phenomenon – a Metaphor

I wrote about this in a paper I presented at Stirling University, United Kingdom in June 2012, and the metaphor persists in my mind. This is what I wrote then. I include it because it is a strong metaphor that allows me to personify those who ventriloquise education.

A red chair is meaningful in my consideration of a classroom as it stands as a focus, a phenomenon representative of praxis and theory in my world of education. Guided by the thoughts of Max van Manen (1990) as he discusses the finding meaning in our lived experience, I explore understandings of a red chair phenomenon in an attempt to elucidate encounters within an existing classroom in a public high school in Tasmania.

I start with the notion of looking at an object. Objects are as they present themselves to us—a chair is indeed a chair, from its structure. Thus I consciously accept the chair as a thing or an object. However, should I then present a phenomenological analysis of chair, I might begin to understand that it is a chair where one reclines to relax and I understand the times when this chair might be used. I see the design of the chair and, should it be old, I might equate that with a measure of pleasure as to its antique design and the stories of those who have spent time in this chair. I create layers to the spatial, temporal and aesthetic being of this chair as I consider the theory that might lead to its manifestation in my classroom.

My natural attitude allows me to demonstrate a singular angle whilst absenting a phenomenological understanding. This removes prejudgment and I am able to report my initial visual perspective minus theoretical notions. Sokolowski (2000, p. 5) suggests that natural attitude is a position from which we begin a journey into understanding. My journey begins and I commence my exploration of a red plastic chair phenomenon. When I walk into my classroom, I see and accept the presence of a red plastic chair. I tend not to pause and reflect that it has any other perspectives.

A chair—red, plastic with a very upright contoured back, designed perhaps to penetrate and tease the human scapula by its architecture, and four metal legs balancing the whole structure upon a grey, acrylic carpet. I hesitate to touch it. I see and accept the presence of a desk. Not yet do I reflect upon the effect of its qualities

yet it is there as a desk—pale laminate. I see a small shelf holding books, and measuring about one metre by one and a half metres.

I see a student and accept her as a presence—a student is seated on a red plastic chair, which has four metal legs. I am not yet reflecting on gender or any other perspective of being. The student is sitting on the chair at the desk in a classroom in a Tasmanian public high school.

I am a teacher. I am female and it is my Self who has set out to “see” the classroom. My Self holds only an absented understanding of the being and identities within my presence. As teacher, I am historically positioned as a centrepiece, intent upon imparting an imposed curriculum to students, as has been decreed by our Federal Parliament.

The classroom is nondescript with an assortment of posters on the wall—they portray general aspects of science but they are not colourful. The posters merge into the wall. I am not yet reflecting metaphorically about the classroom’s place in the scheme of the school as perhaps one cell in a honeycomb built amongst countless others repetitively. Similarly, I am not yet ready to seek visual or aesthetic stimulation from any part of the room set in a seventies architectural paradigm for school design.

In my natural attitude, there is no interpretation of the being of any aspect or object within the classroom. I fragment all into parts of a whole that endures as a sequence of objects and physical bodies—a concrete creation. The concrete, the physical aspect of the classroom endures as an object. Eventually each fragment provokes my contemplation.

Thought inserts itself into the relationship between my consciousness and the things within my immediate sphere. I adopt a phenomenological attitude, which

evokes possibilities for thinking about objects themselves, creating metaphor and comparison turning them into phenomena representative of theories of understanding. Why do I have this presentation of a classroom? Is the room purely a sum of objects within it? What notions lie behind the idea of a school and education?

Intently I gaze, and see a number of desks, each with its own red plastic chair, symbolising individualism, self-dependency and competition as hallmarks of educational achievement. There are winners and losers in this room but I am unable to name them yet. This room tells me that education “happens” when individuals are separated, made silent, not touching; separate desks and chairs imply that this is the intention. Individuals might be incited towards competitiveness through the separateness within this context. Is this theory, behind such organisation, one that betrays an underlying notion of power in education? If so, then power for whom? Is it so that the competitors can “beat” the opposition? Is the intention that one can achieve a sound qualification; also that a successful career can be gained and that this is the measure of good education? That such a theory is so instilled in the history of the classroom roars painfully in my ears. Can this classroom be a reproduction of a society where success is for an individual? Does this separateness become maintained through a policing of how to be?

Grumet (1988, p. 111) suggests that a “teacher look” can be an enforcer of how students act and behave. Grumet’s look is my gaze. The public education system traditionally requires me to stand, a female teacher, in a classroom space inhabited by red plastic chairs, grey laminated desks and thirty students. I am able to gaze across the classroom. A system—in front of classroom, students in front of teacher, and teacher in front of students behind barriers of desk—is such separation a declaration of power of teacher over student? Is such separational theory intended deliberately to isolate students so they can least influence their comrades and their

environment? Is this theory a path towards good education? Is separation theory about control of students by teacher? Is this separation supported by the gaze of the teacher as control of a classroom is enforced? With this in mind, I become distracted by what might happen should the dynamics of control change but this digression is to be explored within my thesis when issues of gender control are scrutinised as those who ask questions, do not fit a mould, shake that box and begin to expose the imposed parameters of the Symbolic Order (Myers, 2003, p.21).

Power Within

I will hesitate here and wonder with you as to who is doing this teaching and who is doing learning. What is being done in education and what might its purpose be?

To understand who is present in a process of education, I take a glimpse into a classroom of my red plastic chair, which will, under normal conditions, contain approximately twenty-eight girls and boys and one adult. Moving around a school building will allow for the exposure of a much greater adult population than had been previously thought. To “govern” a school, there is a Principal who has privileges and responsibilities that others do not have and, previous to 2013, was given an 11% bonus per year for adhering to desired Departmental outcomes. Depending upon the size of the school, there could be Assistant Principals (anything from one to four), Advanced Skills Teachers (Senior Staff), an Executive Manager, Administrative Assistants, cleaners, grounds people and, of course, other teachers. A school hosts a large and diverse population who, together, make up a school culture.

A student body is extremely varied in most schools. Homogeneity might be achieved in some classes but it will be based around academic achievement or gender as, still, there are myriads of identities within a classroom. Teachers, too, are

all different. These differences can be manifested in experiences, appearances, achievements, interests, personalities, gender and identities. Each Self is an individual Self.

I establish that a school is composed of a range of people and occurs in designated places. Schools, in Tasmania, once offered the Tasmanian Curriculum in all learning areas but, now, an Australian Curriculum is in the process of being introduced into schools. This National Curriculum is currently operating in the areas of Maths, English, Science and History. At the time of this inquiry, Tasmania was operating with its own formal curriculum but I have introduced questions concerning curriculum and placed them on a National agenda as in the Australian Curriculum.

All Australian school children undergo standardised testing in Numeracy and Literacy in Grades Three, Six, Seven and Nine. This is called NAPLAN (National Assessment Plan for Literacy and Numeracy) testing.

At the end of Grade Six, students move to a new school, a high school; and at the completion of Grade Ten, students leave high school and move into a Secondary College. Learning, in education terms, continues throughout a school career and beyond into a workforce.

Successful Learning

By my own interpretation, as I stand as a teacher Self, I say that learning is the gaining of a skill, some knowledge and applying it to life experience, to varied situations. Skills can be manual, emotional, mental or academic. Knowledge is interesting. Is it composed of facts? Is it culturally valued facts and understandings? Is it power based with this knowledge, advantaging those who “have” it? This is a question to be addressed in my inquiry as knowledge and skills can become

problematic when there are certain ways of being that advantage some and marginalise others. Biesta (2010, p. 14) makes learning problematic as he considers the idea that education is being measured but not in terms of what “good” education might be. Instead he talks of measurements being taken of things that can be easily measured and it is these things that are given value. As a science teacher in Tasmania, I have a National Curriculum that contains designated content and skills that are to be understood and mastered by my students at the completion of each year, whereupon each child will be assessed as a lettered level – A, B, C, D, and E. This will describe their academic achievement for that year. Successful completion of each curriculum will assign an alphabetical value to the student’s learning. I propose that a perceived value of learning is that measurement is possible and benchmarked against pre-determined outcomes, through some standardised method such as testing. That it can be done as tests denote designated ends or outcomes whereas educational practices that explore ways of thinking have no pre-determined outcomes and thus cannot be quantitatively valued (Biesta, 2010, p. 14).

If this is what I am teaching towards, then might due consideration be given to a notion that the importance of this education is that students are learning, taking in and understanding all these skills and knowledge that I am imparting so that they might successfully complete an academic year. My problem lies in believing that learning is about understanding and exploration. Learning is not reflexive behaviour but I see that it denotes brain activity and thought patterns of individuals who, as subjects, gaze with their own eyes upon a world and prepare to make their way into it. A good education might allow for this to happen.

Good Education

What is meant by good education? So often, I hear parents and teachers talking about schools that offer good education. For some they might be considering a private school where parents pay upwards of ten thousand dollars per term to have their child become a student of a particular school. A dollar value gives educational value by some definitions, but does it? Some public high schools in Tasmania, in 2013, will operate an educational programme on three hundred thousand dollars for a school of eight hundred students. Federal and state funding bodies provide these governmental funds. This equates to approximately three hundred and seventy five dollars per student per year, which is a long way removed from a private school funding. In order to appropriate this funding and to attract more, schools have certain activities that become valued on a national level such as literacy and numeracy. I am not discussing funding for appropriate programmes, but I will investigate power in terms of the funding bodies influencing what happens in schools as a means of social organisation.

What or who, determines “good education”? I look at this term and wonder whether I actually mean a good process of providing education? Do I mean a good system that has a definable outcome as in an empirical value on education that will determine its goodness? Perhaps I am referring to a good bureaucracy that is financially providing a good system whereby persons attend an institution where they can be inducted into norms, mores and culture of society. Maybe I am talking of education, within a school or system that is good for those taking part. Barthes (in Culler, 1983, p. Loc 1055) speaks of norms as a network of signifying phenomenon that is constant throughout the network. I might see a “network” and identify the

norm as employed, home owning males being the people in local government. Thus the norms here are to be male, employed and home owning.

I have awakened my own curiosity in reflecting upon this term, “good education”. What do I mean by good? Are we all seeking a good education? Will that expose good teachers? Will students be then, good citizens in a democratic community, a rational community? I am still asking questions. My role, as hysteric, is to come to some understanding about the Big Other and its “education”.

What do I mean by good education? The notion can cover a very wide field and I want to keep it narrow enough so that I can determine and manipulate the ideas that will decidedly spring forth. Good remains problematic for me. “Good” behaviour, “good” student, “good” teacher, “good” education and “good” work.

The Oxford Online Dictionary defines “good” as to be desired or approved of; having the required qualities of a high standard; appropriate to a particular purpose; possessing or displaying moral virtue (Oxford Online Dictionary).

Thus, a good education might be one that has the required qualities of a high standard and, it becomes further problematised by wondering what these required qualities are. Biesta (2006, p. 20) discusses this learning in education to be considered as a commodity which is like a transaction from teacher to student as teacher gives student what she needs to achieve her A, B, C, D; a quantifiable outcome. As I am concerned with education and what happens in a system where we are educating girls, I am focusing my question upon a female gender. What do I mean by good education for girls in a public high school in Tasmania? Perhaps the notion of good education for girls is more global and I can wonder what good education for girls might look like in Australia.

After establishing this, I move onto how I, as a woman and as a teacher might consider education. How do I, as a teacher, as a woman and as a human, consider education? I walk into a room that loudly manifests educational theories in colour red and in its being. All stakeholders in education are enacting beliefs and values, which have been given primacy by governments, judiciary, social networks, cultures, parents, teachers and students.

A Red Chair Persists

I return to my red chair.

My teaching experience leads me to believe that there is a special someone or group of some ones who have a theory about education. A governmentally funded, architecturally constructed institution, furnished in minimalistic fashion, and populated by teacher survivors of a similar previous institution, provides a context for transmission of culturally important knowledge, values and ideas to those we call students, adolescent human beings. With a sound input of “something”, successful outcomes of someone’s theory will be a fruitful integration of adolescents into a society benchmarked by literacy and numeracy standards, educational level attained, employment statistics and valued behaviours.

I offer the idea that for politicians, education might be about providing an adequate labour force of skilled persons; to parents it might be about acquiring qualifications, status and a career. My dialogue with parents and educational “authorities” delivers confirmation of these notions of acquisition. So this “someone’s” theory regarding necessary modes of being for societal members is expressed through a governmentally funded system on which public schools are totally dependent.

Budgets require attention and red plastic chairs are economical.

Immediately I wonder about school dependency and imagine a see-saw where school is unable to find a balance between philosophy and funding.

I encounter an interesting dichotomy as, if government provides resources for theory enactment, is there not an element of power for the funds provider over what is to be enacted by all protagonists and what knowledge is to be imparted? Yet, I have assumed that education is aligned with the notion of freedom—freedom to change, freedom to affect change, freedom to have voice, emancipation of the Self, subjectivisation and subjectification. Whichever one is considered, there is a powerful significance that a focus for education is upon the being of a student and their coming into presence. Power and emancipation would seem to be contradictory and a scene is set whereby there are winners and losers. I intend to explore this notion further into my thesis but wish to leave it standing as a metaphor within a classroom embodiment of educational theory

Throughout his book, *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker J Palmer (2000) discusses education as a dynamic inner journey whereby we might come to see and be in the world. I can relate this with Biesta's ideas (2006, p. 27) as he regards good education as a coming into being in a world where there are others and a diversity of subjects. As I consider the red chair phenomenon, I perceive that Palmer and Biesta's philosophies of an emancipatory adventure conflicts with control, power, hierarchy and its representative red chair. A conflicting situation between what education is and what it might be, poses a question as to whether it is possible to have a “good” school where education happens?

Quest for a Good School

A school is a positioned institution where students and other stakeholders are present for a time. While within that space, there are activities involving all present and these activities are parts and moments of education.

I continue in my quest to understand what good education is, by further developing notions of other paths of enlightenment regarding education. I see that it might enable a person to not remain ignorant of basic literacy and numeracy. It can allow and encourage a mind to develop ways of thinking and being. Within an education system and at school, a person might achieve qualifications that provide a basis for further study in a tertiary institution or qualifications might permit a person to move into some other kind of training or learning. Qualification, by inference, allows for the provision of qualifications that will enable a person to participate in employment.

Schools provide a person with learning that will make opportunities for a qualification to be gained so there will be employment as a measureable outcome. To be marginalised by this system limits openings to gain those qualifications by which acceptance and status might be measured. From qualifications gained, it is possible to move into careers of high status, power, high earning capacities and political gain. This is dependent upon the qualification gained and career selected. A qualification function can also determine skills and knowledge of citizenship, as, without this, knowledge, marginalisation removes access to opportunities open to those within the rational community (Biesta, 2006, p. 58). I see that a qualification function in education is also a means of socialisation for status attained through qualification, which allows for determination of a suitable placement into a social order. Through

an application of apt symbols to a qualification and through using a signifier of career, placement within the Symbolic Order becomes a reality and one that confers value to a person. Alienation from careers or positions, such as those that deter females, decreases access to power, status and the associated benefits of being in those strata.

Through threatening loss of qualification or non-attainment, some schools issue a control mechanism for school and classroom management, behaviour control and school administration. A school's value is determined through its attainment of high academic standards, which are a pre-requisite for access to high status careers.

Australia has a website which affords society a profile of which schools are successful, as measured by their achievements in NAPLAN standardised testing. The site is called My School and is operated by ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority).

Is this all? Is this education?

This is a sound question as it is what those who look at *My School* (ACARA, My School) website can see. Reflect upon the NAPLAN testing as a valid measurement used to gauge the “goodness” of a school but, if considered and reflected upon, this might actually mean how successfully literacy and numeracy is taught. It might also mean that students who attend this school are more likely to be children of parents who emphasise these skills and thus the students are quite facile and comfortable as literate and numerate human beings. Barone (2000, p. 120) speaks of an undesirability about having standardised schools, standardised students and standardised teachers which are all measurable and accountable as regards fitting the mold of pre-determined ways of being.

Schools are part of society. As structural institutions they are built as funded erections, as repositories of children of the society. There are understandings of the social order that are requisite within a social place, as it is the Symbolic Order which determines parameters (Myers, 2003, p.22). A society designates curriculums and structures for schools. A ruling order as a Symbolic order places value upon certain knowledge and understandings, destined for student consumption, through inclusion in a curriculum. I consider these as things that might determine access to future possibilities. Thus knowledge of specific social information might perpetuate immobility of certain human beings within the Symbolic Order.

Locking Doors

A bureaucracy governs a school, with both as hierarchically systematised bodies. A school that resists a society of which it is a part might be unfunded by a governmental body as it is not considered then to be a part of the governing norms of society and thus not reflective of social norms and culture. Tom Barone talks of the school as an image of a factory where a school is implicitly designed to bring forth prototypes, school graduates, designed by external planners and outcomes of curriculum requirements and standardised instruments of assessment by which the effectiveness of teachers can be gauged (2000, p, 120).

I want to move beyond the superficial and quantifiable so I invite all to consider the fact that a school is full of people who relate to each other in different ways. In some schools power governs relationality through social exclusion or inclusion. However, for humans to exist in a building, under the banner of education, there must be ways for them to relate to each other. I re visit van Manen's (1990, p. 104)

notion of a phenomenological study of lived experience as looking at a body in place and time, and their relationships within that space.

At school, a person is part of a complex web of relationships. No child is able to operate in isolation. Even should they be remarkably shy, there will be a teacher, a counsellor or some supportive adult who will communicate with them. Most students work within a web of diverse and changing relationships with a broad variety of others. This “person” way of viewing education brings me to the point of observing a person. A person brings to a school their history, background and prior learning of how to be with groups or individuals. This also can establish that a person brings their thoughts, concepts, their sub culture, their beliefs and values. This is what a person is within the society; it is their historicity. A child will bring to school all that is familiar and learned up to this stage at which a secondary school is attended.

From where do these beliefs and values come? People hear what others say and parental beliefs and values, peer beliefs and values all serve to establish a very multi-layered system within a school. These beliefs and values might also represent a cultural way of being—an established cultural way. This then pertains to a definition of “good” education by entertaining the concept of good as possessing or displaying moral virtue (Oxford Online Dictionary).

Just as younger children utter “truths” that they have heard from parents, so do adolescents mouth the same but Media imposition can often erode these moral sanctions of parents, by advertising power. Externalised influences appear to have become very strong. Under the influence of a society in which Media is paramount within our economy, adolescents receive different and changing messages daily, which might confuse the “truths”, they thought they held.

When a person is present, they are holding their whole being in the presence of other. This Self to which I would give the name of Real, might not be obvious as, between the Real and becoming a subject, stand many symbols. These symbols might be images or text but within the “becoming” an adolescent might be persuaded to shoulder symbols that might not necessarily be compatible with their Self. Advertising persuades someone of the truth of a fantasy. A novice adolescent, who is ploughing their way along the channels of life, might seek out symbols that bestow popularity and bring a promise of approval and applause. I hear these echoes from my past. An adolescent, like others who are seeking acceptance by a rational community, also embrace those behaviours and norms that will gain them acceptance. Rebels are other and, as such, exist as constant questioners of the Symbolic Order through their non-compliance and refusal to become objects within. I suspect rebels are hysterics.

Who are the enforcers of compliance in a school? I propose that enforcers are legion and are disguised as curriculum (in all its forms), school hierarchy, NAPLAN, school culture, society, tradition and teachers who all form part of a rational community, a Symbolic Order of education. Stability might appear to be an aim of education as it subtly incites acquiescence.

Rational Community

I seek to bring this notion of rational community into my discussion because within my Australia, it is very clearly a masculine rational community, regardless of whether one considers its laws and other human rights as essential symbols of civil order.

Recent local issues have been raised amongst many groups who are horrified by the rampant sexism and misogyny towards women. In a society that has Anti-Discrimination Laws and Human Rights Laws, there is a rational community that infiltrates all aspects of life. Anne Summers, in her book *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in the 21st Century* (2003), provides insight into the operations of the ruling system and what it means for women and girls.

According to Summers, one of the primary actions undertaken by the Howard Government (in the early 2000's) was to remove the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and make it so that the only way that complaints about sexism could be heard was through the Federal Court where there would be a filing fee of \$1000. By removing assistance from the Legal Aid budget as well, low-income persons (I would suggest, women) could no longer be able to make a complaint and thus were legally disempowered (Summers, 2003, location 1662). From this, one can infer that ideas of harassment and discrimination in respect of women and girls did not warrant funding.

I seek to focus a stronger political lens onto the observation of the status of women and girls as I see this to be very important in investigating education as a place of gender socialisation, which implies a level of acceptance and passivity. Political influence can be established in the rational social community as an overarching philosophy. Should this political influence be perceived as ignorant and inactive regarding girls and women then it might follow that the same thing is happening within society. I make reference here to my red chair metaphor, which represents a politically funded structure of education. With political governance being representative of the Symbolic Order, I am leaning towards accepting that it is highly important for a public education system to be representative of certain norms,

values and behaviours with which society complies. Political inactivity around gender issues focussing on females, and political language and behaviours that actively alienate females, indicate that education for girls might be perceived as insignificant and inconsequential.

I might make a leap and consider that, in order for students to assume their part in the Symbolic Order, it might become paramount that the workings of politics and its social face become a translucent aspect of education. I suggest this as students become used to environments and should this environment contain ways of understanding the political gender manipulations of a society, school is a place where the legitimacy might be almost unquestioned. It is possible to hear parents wanting their children at school so that they learn how to “socialise”. Off they go to Pre-School or Kindergarten, full of intention to “socialise”. At secondary schools, one might hear that it is good for the adolescents to learn how to “socialise”. Actually, it is one thing I have heard from parents and from other teachers regarding the reason for not having single gender schools. People have informed me they believe that if girls are kept away from the boys they do not learn how to “socialise” properly. Questions continue to present themselves to my mind as comments that once I might have considered normal become problematic for me. This leads me into questions as to why girls might need to learn to work with boys in a class situation. Is there something different about how boys work and girls have to learn to understand the workings of a boy? Perhaps there is something that girls can learn from boys as they work in class. Is this socialisation? As “socialise” appears to be a signifying word in education, I would like to dissect and explore it as a word of importance in education.

Socialising for a Rational Community

I admit that socialisation of students happens at school, as in all spaces. What is socialisation and what is its purpose? Socialisation is the learning of how to be a part of the society. The socialisation function of education might be understood in terms of the acquisition of norms, values, and particular ways of doing and being (Peters & Biesta, 2009, p. 98). Upon reflection, I might consider that socialisation is learning how to fit into a “normal” society or a rational community (Biesta, 2006, p. 67). This might seem rather easy as we are all born into a particular society with a particular family origin thus it would appear to be a simple fit. Society is to be learned about. It is not an immediate absorption of all mores and values. A baby is born as a human being and, when born, Zizek suggests it is immediately within the Symbolic Order through its family history and status, political power and financial position of parents. The baby then begins its being as a gender socialised by gender norms, values and behaviours—the Symbolic Order is an imposer of ways of being (in Myers, 2003, p. 22).

Education as an accepted institution of society enacts and enforces those norms and values as it socialises. Biesta speaks of the notion of an acquisition of desirable forms of knowledge and values of the rational community as a primary current function of education (Biesta, 2006, p. 68).

I take these suggestions of socialisation and place them within a classroom space. Immediately I consider questions such as who is being socialised and how is this happening? What mechanisms are being used to induce acquisition? Might it just be possible that a female teacher, who was born as a human being and became a woman, might be influenced in her actions by her historical socialisation and, is she

not still a member of society with its norms and values? These are confronting questions as it is time to make due consideration of what is seen within the classroom. What signs and information might I, in my role as observer, be looking for? Are girls learning ways of being so they can be slotted in to a pre-existing order of society? I delve a little further into society as I begin to come to understand how parts and moments make up this cultural umbrella as it enforces its norms.

Society as Rational Community and the Symbolic Order

I wish to consider “society” as a generic term. I explain this by writing about the notion of what we can call a society. A society is a functioning organic group of organisms. In the terms of my thesis, I am referring to human beings. I can nationalise these human beings by noting that they are Australian, a political and regional classification. Linnaeus’ classification profile might be apt at this point. Linnaeus devised a system of classification is that the scientifically accepted classification system for all living organisms, which is also spoken of as using binomial nomenclature (Carolus Linnaeus). This is interesting at this point also as it is accepted, in the scientific world, that there is a human genome. I emphasise this. There is a human genome. There is a genetic sameness to being human as every human being has a code of life in his or her DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid). There is one difference and that is in the sex chromosomes. Females have an XX and males have an XY. This is the only difference discovered up to this point of my writing. There is no gene for housework or cooking—as I had suspected many years ago. The signifying word of interest is “human” and Linnaeus attaches to this word a chain of signifiers that provide a physiological description of human, not female or male, as follows.

Kingdom – Animal

Phylum – Chordate

Class – Mammal

Order – Primate

Family – Hominidae

Genus – Homo

Species – Sapiens

It is interesting to note how we, as human beings, as *Homo Sapiens*, all fall under the one classification and it is only when we get right down to species that we begin to divide humans, as to their diversity. The arbitrary dividing of human beings through race and gender suggests to me that these are two factors that provide profound information as to what a human being's status is within the Big Other.

I have shown that man, as default language, is the preferred gender. My experience as a member of society and through family history consolidates this idea. Using race as a determining factor is another obvious way of focussing on other. The otherness of female gender obscures access to a more dominant and powerful masculine community whose ownership of our language alone, would appear to confer importance and position. I am not going to include a discussion on race except to say that colour is indicative of status as is borne out historically but this is not within the scope of my thesis.

Biesta (2006, p. 124) discusses the notion that through a major function of education, that of socialisation, we become part of particular social, cultural and political "orders". It is not only Biesta who speaks of these orders. Tom Barone

(2000, p. 120) also speaks of fitting into pre-existing orders; Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 104) asserts strongly that society strongly controls the mechanisms by which we are inserted into an order.

I see that socialisation rarely occurs with an outcome of increasing access to resources. No indeed! Education socialisation occurs and perpetuates inequality. Perhaps it might be a thought that a government as representative of a society, with its funding of public schools, really could have an interest in a perpetuation of a current society and protecting those to whom all resources are available.

Now, I place before us, an idea that gender inequality might also be part of this. In whose interests is it, for the maintenance of power for male *Homo Sapiens*? Should we consider power for female *Homo Sapiens*? I construct a real picture showing how important it is to look at the gendered construction of society, as we know it. If I announce to you that females do not constitute the powerful part of society, and I go on to show that politically, legally, financially and socially, females remain in the lower echelons of our society through an inequality of political socio economic access, would we develop a shared notion of what has happened? Anne Summers, (2003) confronts these notions as reality and says that females do not constitute the more powerful portion of our community. She goes on to assert that there is a systematic determination to undermine any hoped for change. The Prime Minister of Australia, Ms. Julia Gillard, in her speech to parliament (2012) spoke of the inherent sexism within the male dominated halls of parliament where all our governing is done. Can we suppose that sexism is within all levels of society?

I am gradually arriving at an understanding that society has subtle guardians of its mores and values. It is possible to reign in outspoken thought. It is possible to intimidate and bully. It is possible to stop radical notions that might lead to a status

quo upset. In my Introduction, I spoke of my personal fears of enforced isolation, ostracism and labelling by portions of society. Would this be what is wanted? Can the Symbolic Order, the Big Other, find ways and means of controlling actions and thoughts that would undermine the political and social system currently in place? Do schools have a role to play in this?

Schools as Rational Communities

Most importantly for my thesis, how does socialisation happen in schools and who is doing it? Do schools teach girls how to be? Do the dynamics of the classroom support a successful way of being for a girl? Do they clearly demonstrate that there are acceptable things that girls do and don't do? How do they police this? Can this be possible in schools, as surely this is where education is happening and education is all about intellect and learning and thinking?

Carefully and quietly, yet arbitrarily, situations and actions happen and most people would have no notion of being socialised into a gender. Subliminal messages conveyed through Media and society help to situate and to police behaviours and norms.

It must not be forgotten that government funds schools and it is in the interest of the government to make sure that the wishes of the rational community are enacted within this environment. As has already been pointed out, the interests of the powerful are most likely to be transferred through into school society and into the socialising of the students.

This notion of socialisation cannot be dispelled from my thesis. It comes at me through Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 111) though Biesta (2006, p. 124) and it constantly pierces my thoughts. Why must girls be socialised? Why must people be socialised

in pre-determined ways? Please note that I am able to accept the notion of a social space and rules of interaction but I am confounded and perplexed by why the rules become respective of gender.

Biesta provides us with some insight as to how this occurs within education systems and the purpose of socialising the participants of education (2006, p. 7). What will it mean for the students if they comply? What rewards await them when they become fully-fledged members of society, neatly fitting in to pre-existing orders? What might it mean to be Other in a rational community?

Other in a Rational Community

Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 23) reveals the Big Other and the Symbolic Order as the governance and overseers of society whereby to comply is to be rewarded and to rebel is to fail. Failure then is given as various punishments to those who do not fit and it is often offered as a means of control within a school. How often do I hear, “You must pass your subjects or you will not get the job you want or get into university and you must behave or you will not pass these subjects and thus you won’t get the job!”

As I hear this, I ask myself if this is what I am doing in education—forcing compliance to existing social orders and expectations. Might I not be here helping a girl come into presence as a unique individual (Biesta, 2006, p. 68)? I will examine notions of being and Self in Chapter 6, as both are present with many forms in education. I focus on the notion of coming into being as human as, because we exist in society, we are social beings and belong in a society of other humans. How does the process of education affect girls as they aspire towards a standard of “good”? At this junction, I am aligning education of girls with “good” as meaning appropriate to

a particular purpose (Oxford Dictionary Online). Do these notions become enacted within our system? Perhaps we have a system that has been starkly contaminated by empiricism, sexism and collaboration in groups of established and accepted identities?

I ask myself now about who is providing this kind of “good” education? Is it funded? Education is funded and government funds schools within which I teach. This is now where I personify governments with long arms as they enmesh and trip participants wandering the dark corridors of education. I form a notion of government as a democratically elected group of people who manage and provide funds so that various activities deemed to be important in society can be carried out. I write at this time that power groups, who seek to have their interests established as imperative, influence a government. I view this as I discuss the notion of the rational community who seek to have all become members. However to become a member of the rational community, I embrace a language of familiarity so as not to be excluded. Language is a vital part of this discussion, and I establish ways of being so that behaviours and being are understood and shared within the rational community. I learn this community and the ways of practicing for it. I need to understand roles and requirements of those roles so that I understand operations and dynamics of the rational community. Should I fail to gather all-important information, I might find myself relegated to Other. As Other I have no place within the rational community, which has the administrative task of policing compliance, and adherence to the norms of society—removing Otherness from Other.

I might suggest though that it is purely through acknowledging people as Other that the rational community can really learn to monitor behaviours so that those that outside the norm can be identified as being not normal or acceptable. This provides

parameters for ways of being. It removes a desire to be too much of an individual and it also strongly supports the notion of power structures that might confer power and position on those who most clearly demonstrate the characteristics of the rational community. This clarity with which certain behaviours might be viewed allows for those behaviours, which do not fit with rational community to be denigrated and loudly condemned as being undesirable.

Zizek tells me that there are choices to be made as to how strong an influence the Symbolic Order has upon our being. I take this to mean that we selectively adhere to certain strictures of compliance. I think that some modes of enforcement such as those that impact the security of an adolescent Self as it gradually composes its own personal understandings might cause a passivity in personal action and emotional disempowerment of an individual (Pipher, 1994, p. 22).

Adolescent Other in a Rational Community

Adolescents are on the cusp of adulthood as they are neither full social members nor are they children anymore. Physically they have changing bodies and an awareness of sexuality. Mentally, there are expected behaviours that were not necessarily present when they were children. They look around and see men and women. What is it that men are doing and what are the women doing? What must a girl do if she is to become a recognised female within this society? How must she behave and how should she look?

One of the greatest initiators into adulthood for girls is the shaving of hairless legs. This is what women do. What sort of clothes does a woman wear? Does she wear her hair very short? Should she always be wearing trousers? Why must she wear a short skirt? What happens when she wears a short skirt?

Suddenly there is a sexual awareness that is part of the hormonal awakening. What is sex? What is her role in sex? What must she do if she is to understand sex? What do girls and women do, as role players with sex? Is sexuality a part of socialisation? How must she be as a sexualised being? Can she be socialised without the understanding of sexuality and the subtle innuendos that accompany this (Pipher, 1994, p. 205)?

Can she be the same with boys? Are boys the same or has their awakening brought them new knowledge in ways of being? What kind of difference is assaulting these young people? Can they retain their true Self in this journey or must it be subdued? Is the true Self a positively acceptable socialised Self?

And so this adolescent girl is bombarded with the onslaught. Where does she learn her ways of being? How powerful are the role models around her? Who provides her with the most alluring way of being? What will make her popular? Can she be intelligent and have sexuality?

How do boys see this emerging woman? How important is it to have a boyfriend and what must she do to have a boyfriend? Who is talking to her about having boyfriends and why is this a very important thing for a girl to do? What will happen to her if she doesn't have a boyfriend? Who is telling her this? Who is perpetuating stories of how girls are and how boys are? What subtle little activities and events are occurring whereby this happens?

Breaching Conformity

In discussing this notion of becoming a subject and of coming into being, I find myself confronted by two terms, subjectification and subjectivisation. Both are concerned with an individual as subject and how this might happen. On one hand, I

see the weightiness of Žižek's subject naming by the Symbolic as almost dangerous while Biesta's subjectification offers a more considered approach to responsibly approaching subjecthood.

Perhaps the most fearsome aspect of Biesta's thoughts on education is the notion of subjectification or individualisation. I will the terms as interchangeable. He says that this is about the building of independence and freedom from an expectation of being inserted into a particular social way of being. We might expand this into supposing that an individual might, in this freedom, have a choice as to where they might fit. Žižek's ideas (in Myers, 2003, p.41) on subjectivisation show how we are real and true before society and that the Symbolic Order confers subjecthood through announcing how the subject is to be. An announcement comes from outside my self; an announcing by some external Symbolic Other that I become a subject through having designated attached words to me. I can sense the danger and power within this process as if I turn towards subjectification, I see that this signifier does not claim Biesta's presentation as a negative process as I see that what he has done is to strongly tie his term into the bringing in to presence of a human being as an individual might be given her own voice without the restrictions that confer pre-determined ways of being as with subjectivisation. I see the Symbolic Order might help and support an individual in the Void, in that stage before they slot into a box, by encouraging questions so a question might be asked, "What do you want of me?" Instead of pre-determining an answer, it might be possible for a Big Other to turn responsibility back to the individual and say, "What do you want of yourself?" Sadly, a signifier of a gender is labelled immediately with a chain of signifiers put forward by the Big Other in their intention to answer the question of "Che Vuoi?"

Subjectification is a word that might conjure thoughts of a being in relation to another being—a status orientation of one to another. This perception of subjectification might come from the supposition that is if one subjectifies, it is something that one does to another being—make a subject of. Suppose I take this, then, but suggest that subjectification is when I make my Self a focus—my Self becomes subject within my process. I become subject to this process of subjectification. This might then internalise the process and remove any notion of it being “done” to an Other.

Can education “do” that? Can it cause the internalisation of the subjectification process so that all individuals might enable this power? We might think that this is a far-seeming idea, a wish that floats outside the realms of reality. After all, within education, we mostly view collections of people gathering in rooms—it is usually a group activity.

I might now extend this further and consider the idea of education as being a happening time for group structuring, for group organisation, for mass production. If education is a group process, we might suppose that the desired outcomes are based around those things that are desirable for a group, a social group. I regard this notion of a group and find myself somewhat incensed as, if “I” am to be educated, how can “I”, a unique individual, be supposed to have the identical outcomes, the desired outcomes, the same outcomes as every other group member? Would I become standardised (Barone, 2000, p. 120)? I do understand that there are certain ways of being that could be seen to be of benefit to a community. Perhaps there are ways by which we learn to negotiate the pathways and valleys, determined by our choices, should we be able to make them. Maybe there is certain cultural knowledge that might advantage us, if it leads us to be members of the rational community. In this I

am considered to speak the language of the community, I act out the behaviours that are respected and desired as I learn the cultural advantages that might lead to status, power and wealth. Through this, I see that there are certain ways by which members of this society and culture are able to gain the rewards of status and power. Thus, because I am educated as a group member, as a member of the rational community, I understand what might be required of me so that I do not remain as one of the Others. I learn how to conform and fit into a community and lose some of my Otherness.

Might we not wish to become autonomous within a community? Is this perhaps too ambiguous? Communities are composed of groups of people, perhaps having a common purpose and goals. Can autonomy be possible with a functioning community? I believe that this is where the notion of subjectification and individualisation now begin to become interesting.

I see subjectification as a human coming into their own and when a person is able to be her Self. But this does beg the question of what is her Self? Is the Self not the same as every other human being? I established that, as humans, we share a *Homo Sapiens* status. Thus we identify as human beings and anyone, wishing to inspect the physiology of us would, no doubt, agree.

To be an “I”, a Self, a human who has an individual identity is still to be human but it roars a perception of a solitary Self, adrift in a vast sea of many. It shouts “Me” while fathoming a sea into which this Me can be immersed. I am not just another human being. It is “I” and I am writing this and I am thinking this. I am now identifying myself as a being apart from others. However, I want to share my thoughts with you all, so I establish ways whereby we might share understanding and some learning. I use language that we might all know or love. I use phrases and

syntax to excite your mind yet I seek your empathy so that you might be part of my community. I am the embodiment of my voice, which stands as a unique and wonderful aspect of my being. I have the confidence to be me, “I”, a Self. I have the courage to stand alone, for my Self to show you how it is. I wish you to understand this true Self of “I”. I will not write to appease your conscience or ideas; I do not write to condemn; I do not write to segregate or isolate. I write to carry you into my story. I write so I might reflect and understand.

My Self will stand. It is I. I do not wish to be counteracted by Advertising and Media; I wish to learn of our world. My learning, my writing, my thesis has enabled this bizarre empowerment of my Self. I am part of an education system yet I am encouraged to think with my own mind, using my Self and my narrative to understand aspects that puzzle and confuse. What might I do to change things so that all might have this exposure to individuation? Paul Tillich (2000, p. loc 1598) talks of individualisation as the Self-affirmation of the individual Self without regard to its participation in the world.

Tillich also talks (2000, p. loc 2091) of self-affirmation as the overcoming of negation. It is powerful. He goes on to say that Power is the possibility a being has to actualise itself against the resistance of other beings. I understand these words as an opening into the world of Self. It is the empowering of Self to stand as an individual, to be. It gives strength to those who wish for the Self to stand up and allow them to put aside the ideas that for some, they are a non-being. The mere fact that some consider them as a non-being gives them an identity apart from those others. It confirms a status, even if that might be of non-being in the eyes of the other. But courage confers power. Courage brings forth Self and “I”.

It does take courage. It takes strength to be one amongst many. To stand, alone, is to be naked before the world and how many of us might find that that is too hard? How much easier might it be to clothe our Self in the garments of others, to merge and conform, to abide and obey? I do not believe that there is courage in conformity. It is easier to speak the same language. Thus, I see that to be individualised and subjectified means a being must become strong and courageous. I look around me to find how this might be for some? How does this “happen”? Is it given to us? Is there a package for courage? Can I draw up a “one size fits all” package for teachers so that they can individuate girls they teach? Does our education encourage and enable this aspect of education? Am I part of a process that qualifies and socialises girls but changes little for them in respect of their being?

My thesis examines the ways by which our institutionalised education undertakes these notions of “good “ education as Biesta discusses. I move now towards showing what happens in our schools to subvert the coming of a person into being and I wish to show how I know and understand this to be.

Barone (2000, p. 121) laments the molding of students into pre-determined visions of success. He goes on to consider what it might be like if schools provided growth of unique, powerful and integrated identities, where subjectification and being became a focus, removed from prevailing and questionable notions of success. Schools and education are institutions and students are institutionalized into performing pre-determined tasks. In my next chapter, walk with me into the lives of humans within a public high school in Tasmania and, as we walk, consider that some might be alien to these pre-determined notions of success and also consider that some stay as an Other who is molded into a pre-determined way of being, into the “natural” order of society. Contemplate what possibilities and immeasurable wonders

that her autonomous educated being might bring to our world should subjectification be a motivating force in “good” education.

In this chapter, I have offered ways of looking at education. I suggest that it is a powerful social and political mechanism into which it is compulsory for all children to be placed until they reach the age of seventeen. During this time, there are many influences that design and affect outcomes for students. I have shown how it is possible to mold them into ways of being that fit into a pre-determined system. Socialising, as a tool, can be contained and controlled within schools, which are funded by governments. Governments have very specific demands of schools and, for schools, their funding is determined through outcomes as measured as quantifiable ends. Principals of schools are dependent upon the total compliance of staff so that they might achieve pre-determined outcomes and thus receive an 11% bonus each year on top of their salary—a very effective method of controlling what Principals do. Sediments of control find their way into every level. Teachers’ compliance is now being brought into schools with teachers needing to behave in externally designed ways—there will be performance accreditation where teachers will then be classified on a scale which determines their “fitness” as teachers. One mode of this is through measuring outcomes of students using standardised testing. It is in the interests of government to have the schools and education system that they perceive as being the most fitting; holding the proper values that determine a good citizen; knowing the right stories that are representative of the most valued aspects of our culture; and having approved behaviours that are deemed to be worthy of reward in a society in which patriarchal dominance is so deeply entrenched, that societal members comply easily and mindlessly as they seem not to understand that the Symbolic Order is a ghost.

Do my steps form a comfortable stairway to the next part? Can you see the gradual opening of an education world as each link falls into its position and each notion finds sanctuary on an educational sill, a place where it fits? Funding sits comfortably in a classroom, on its red plastic chair, safely presented as an accepted notion of schooling.

Upon reflection, I consider that curriculum is a starting point for fitting students into boxes. Curriculum is such that it demands a whole chapter to itself, as its power of influence is profound and complex.

Chapter 5: Contemplating Curriculum

We can start from the simple observation that in order to call someone a learner there must be something for him to learn. This "something" can be almost anything: knowledge, values, understandings, skills, dispositions, capacities, competencies, criticality, identity, autonomy and so on – so long as it can be learned. What is striking about calling someone a learner is, however, not what it is that needs to be learner; what matters is the fact that the learner is constructed in terms of a lack.

Gert Biesta

And she is sitting on a red plastic chair at a desk in a public high school in Tasmania in my presence. She is real. She was born in the 1990's and is a child of the 21st century. My task is to make her a subject, subjectify her and strip her objectivity from her, beginning as she sits, in those moments before transformation while she lacks the knowledge that will confer a preferred way of being.

I have a tool that is prescribed as effective and necessary. I can name this very easily. However, this tangible tool, which comes into life through my being and wisdom, is served by invisible and subversive weaponry. Like dust, it covers surfaces and crevices, resisting attempts to sterilise the atmosphere. It is as radio waves through the atmosphere but it is there and its power cannot be ignored.

I am teacher, educator, explicator (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 42), *phronimos*, Mediator, and translator. I stand, as is expected, in a classroom with students, ready to begin the formal curriculum, as detailed in the Australian National Curriculum.

The notion of a lack of some externalised thought or idea; a concept or notion, is fascinating to consider in the parameters of a formal curriculum whereby it would seem that there are mass numbers of students at certain ages who “lack” knowledge of a formalised content. I assume, then, that knowledge content contained within the formal curriculum is perceived to be important and necessary for a learner to have. I, as teacher, know what this knowledge is as I have a hard copy of the Australian Curriculum. Holding this formal curriculum then confers power on to me as I have it and I can give it. In fact, I am paid to give it.

A Formal Curriculum

Values are named up in this curriculum, as they are deemed important to have as outcomes when students leave after Grade Ten. There would also seem to be also an assumption that they lack the values that have been named by someone existing outside of a school. This deficiency indicates that someone else has something that is desirable and the person, who is going to gratify that deficit, the teacher, has the required surplus through their formal acquisition of requisite knowledge and values to undertake this profound process of education.

I am led into consideration of a formal curriculum and its inferences for students and teachers. I stand, a female teacher, in a classroom space inhabited by red plastic chairs, grey laminated desks and students. My task? I am, as a teacher, about to teach the Science curriculum as a subject of the Australian National Curriculum to

students. Science curriculum has content that students are required to learn and teachers must teach.

As I begin to write this, I find myself thinking about what it is that I, as a teacher, am doing and what I am expected to do. It appears that there is an external “thing”, outside of the classroom, that tells me what to teach, how the student must be at the end of this process of teaching and how it will be measured and evaluated.

This “thing” could be named as the National Curriculum run by a statutory authority, which has been established by the Australian Parliament.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is a statutory authority established by the Australian Parliament. Its functions include: developing a national K-12 curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, developing and administering national assessments, and collecting, managing and analysing student achievement and other data and reporting on school and system performance.

(ACARA, 2011)

What is this thing? What is a curriculum? Colin Marsh (2004, p. 4) attempts to expose this entity. He discusses curriculum as permanent subjects that embody essential knowledge. He maintains that a knowledge-based curriculum cannot exist independent of space and time and, it neither is neutral, factual nor value free. Marsh maintains that curriculum has three characteristics—content, as depicted by words, themes and abstractions; purpose as far as having intellectual, social and personal outcomes; and organisation, which is a presence over time—scope and sequence of content and purpose (2004, p.5). I look at these characteristics of curriculum, seeing a mode of measurement, potential collection of data, evaluation of that empirical measurement and a resultant judgment upon the success or failure of delivery. I need to look more closely so I align the characteristics of curriculum, which Marsh

attributed to Walker (2004, p. 7) with the Australian National Curriculum. Content exists and achievement is there. Assessments are to be collected and analysed, followed by a breakdown of student achievements. Finally a reporting system, regarding performance, can be presented and perused by all stakeholders who might hold a special interest in the results, which reflect a profile of Australian students at a given day of a given year. Is this what I am doing, in my classroom? Am I part of the process, which will be evaluated in measurable student outcomes?

I do understand the need to have curriculum content and the idea of having a vehicle for teaching is acceptable to me but it remains just that—a vehicle. It is not my teaching. Is this to be measured—by externally designed empirical testing? Will this consign my teaching to abysmal or will it confer success upon me? Will those students who only managed to open two doors of the content vehicle, because they were going through a family trauma on that one day, be assigned a status of non-achievement?

If the goal of teaching is to create students who can pass a test that has pre-determined outcomes and seeks quantifiable data, I would feel powerless to undertake what I consider to be education. I feel, through looking at curriculum as a series of measurable outcomes, that there has been a loss of humanness. Perhaps I must approach this from the notion of a student-centred curriculum. What does this mean? Is there content in this curriculum? Are there specific characteristics to be acquired by the student as taught by the teacher? Does this mean that I must focus on a student and the curriculum, only?

I read through the Australian Curriculum again, before looking at the Tasmanian Curriculum. I see that all are written with explicit values, goals and purposes. Whose values? Sensibly this can be ascertained to mean the values and goals of Australian

citizens as this is what we would like an educated student to look like and this is how they will function if the teacher teaches them in the correct manner. I move beyond my purpose here, in trying to understand the notion of curriculum.

Curriculum is what must be taught in schools. It is a mandated function of education in Australia. A school, as an institution, is a place where the values, goals, knowledge and social mores of the rational community are passed on and a school is, after all, an institution funded by society.

Faceless Planners

Ted Aoki, in his book *Curriculum in a New Key*, (2005, p. 160) speaks of curriculum as two-fold. His outlook and discussions of curriculum afford a broad glimpse into this monster as a gentler beast than I currently view it. He proposes curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived experience. Beyond the boundaries of a regional city school in Tasmania is a group of curriculum planners who, under the direction of the Australian Parliament, has developed a national curriculum for all Australian schools. Included in this plan are the planners' own beliefs, values and understandings, which could be proposed according to Aoki, as the aspirational way of being for all young Australians.

Curriculum, as planned by planners, for a faceless group of students and teachers says Aoki, is externalised from the lived experience of the school with no regard for the being of those to whom such a "thing" is entrusted. Remote curriculum for faceless students must become enlivened. It must be opened with the hearts and minds of teachers so that it becomes a lived experience for students.

I read through ACARA to find out what students must achieve, how they should be at the completion of this process of "curriculumisation" but I have not found, yet,

an appreciation of how teachers must be, when they open their hearts and minds for this process to occur.

So I stand, poised, as it were, on the brink between the Real and the Symbolic—poised to subjectivise as I give language to how students must be, words to denote and define and language to confer or remove.

The Real is as a natural attitude—I look and I see with eyes but not with language. Myers attributes to Žižek (2003, p 26) that the Real exists and persists regardless of the conferring of the Symbolic. It is the means by which the Real and the Symbolic are integrated that brings meaning to education. When I look at a classroom, I see students who are present. Žižek speaks of the Real as before language carves it up. I mentioned earlier about the story he uses regarding the Mommy and the mountain. I want to remind you, my readers, of this again. The Mommy sees a mountain in its immediacy, before the mountain becomes enmeshed in language and culture. She saw it without looking at it through a lens of everything she knew was true about mountains (Myers, 2003, p 25). She saw it, as it was, with no other description, no politicisation, no geology, no ownership, nothing else—she saw it just as I might see students in a classroom. So I stand on the brink between what actually is and what happens when I give language to it and translate the Symbolic into chunks of understanding. I make judgments as to what is and what is not suitable and palatable. Imagine an impossible situation in a classroom where time stops and motion ceases, as a new process takes over, as all classroom protagonists have gathered without the instigators of the curriculum, the Big Other. There is no final plan, no pre-determined outcome from this gathering. Curriculum is not a utopian haven.

Consider, a moment, what this means for a teacher and how she will be as she brings into presence her self-understanding. Choices about procedures are made, as her Self is present. The Symbolic has been made known to her as she has the hard copy but her Self gives life to this. This is either a plunge into the abyss through inability to symbolise or a rescue with a ladder of language upon which she encourages students to come into being and to climb to the edge of the abyss.

Consider what this means for a student and how she will be as she brings her self-understanding while education surrounds her. Her Self will make choices as she accepts or denies that which makes itself known to her. She will begin her journey into subjectivisation. Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 41) says that the subject exists at the interface between the Real and the Symbolic and it is here that her subjectivity might come into being and the importance of this forms a base line as I unfold the curriculum.

I return to my two problematic words of subjectification (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 130) and subjectivisation (Myers, 2003, p. 41). Both words are of actions and both are subject-based—by this I mean they make reference to an individual. On one hand, subjectification is a student bringing herself into presence. It acknowledges Others and the Big Other of democracy as part of that process. If it is a social process it is one destined to allow choice by Self and not a straight imposition of ideals or a prescription of how to fit into pre-existing orders. It is a freedom for Self. Subjectivisation, Zizek says, happens when an individual, being poised, without language associations, is acknowledged through signifiers and signifying chains of language and thus moves into the world as a subject. She steps into a world where, should she be unaccustomed to choice, she becomes a

phenomenon of socialisation, part of the rational community and slotted into a pre-determined place.

Subjectification is that part of education that leans towards supporting the stepping into being of the subject. This process, by its very delicacy of dealing with a human being, must be a lifting of veils, a breath of understanding, an uplifting of spirit and a revelation of possibilities. Subjectivisation as I now see it is when human becomes known as human, I, me, woman. It is a tenuous stepping out as with subjectivisation comes a possibility that a subject becomes (Bingham & Biesta, Gert, 2010) gendered (for example). With a female signifier, she might, through an absence of choice as to how this is to be understood, become woman or girl—a symbol of status within a patriarchal world. Trailing her subjected Self with her, she has been fitted into a pre-existing measure of what it is if your signifier is “woman”.

With Zizek’s help, I distinguish subjectification and subjectivisation, both present within education, a classroom and a school. It is the subjectivisation that, if Self is young, that provokes the raising of fences. It is to this that I allude when discussing how it is for girls in a public high school classroom, with a red plastic chair, bought by governmental funds and providing symbolic signification for feminising of girls.

As a curriculum is designed by the planners’ views of the world, their orientations, their values and beliefs, by the stories considered being most vital (Aoki, 2005, p. 60), I assume that a formal curriculum is perceived, by planners, as being able to give each student the best outcomes should she successfully navigate the river of education, in all its tumultuous liquidity. Best outcomes are viewed as fit for insertion into pre-existing social orders, complete with knowledge of traditions, ways of being and knowing (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 20) or successful socialisation. A positive grasp of a curriculum, with its pre-conceived notions of

important knowledge, cultural traditions and ways of being provides a student, should she be successful, with a quantifiable measurement that confers success as a qualification gained entitles them to recognition, either private or overt, as a citizen of a society. I accept that this approach to qualification is not meant to be negative. I mention it here because it is deemed as an important aspect of state organised education and acknowledges economics as a powerful fuel for education.

Between Horizons

The face of the other is inscribed in the "other" of the "other" curriculum—lived curriculum. Implicit in such an understanding of face is the question of our understanding of Self/other; the question of how we should understand the pedagogical relationship of the teaching Self and the other, the student. Ted Aoki (2005, p 212)

A teacher breathes life into curriculum. How? How to breathe life into a “thing” planned by a community that rationalises that these things are the most important things to know within the Australian society? At this stage, I can accept that—there are ways of being that are customary and to be encouraged.

I find Aoki’s essays and his insights into curriculum to be inspirational and provocative which in turn promotes my reflection. He speaks of curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived.

Should I consider the word “curriculum”, I might apply certain labels to it as I bring it forth, from its position of hard copy, into a personal interpretation that curriculum is authoritatively founded, prescriptive, reflective, responsive, contemporary, socially aware, racially considerate, politically correct, value-laden, goal-oriented, radical, futuristic, vocational, child-centred, patriotically storied, layered by patriarchy and forming of national identity.

It is a view of the world. It is one country's story. A curriculum is the story of those who believe in the value of their story. It is the most valued stories and goals within a society and a belief in the imparting of these stories to uphold or to educate. Is it my story? Is it a feminine story? Is it a global story? Do the words enhance the concept of globalisation, non-gender bias or racial bias? Most valued subjects and emphasised processes become compulsory as the pre-determined curriculum becomes manifest.

So what has been given to me, as the Curriculum Area Manager, to bring my staff to teach? I have been given a document, for Science, and there are various desirable outcomes, as stated by the planners. This one-dimensional object with a multi-dimensional desire will instruct what I teach and what my staff do in their classrooms. At the heart of this designed curriculum lies a more insidious goal. As I write, it is being discussed in government circles, in ACARA, that we are to have Science standardised testing beginning next year, just like NAPLAN, which, presumably, will progress its name to NAPALANAS (NAPLAN and Science).

I feel a little like being portrayed as the "finger of God" as I pass this document to the staff and breathe life into a mono dimensional object with us, as teachers, being viewed as the lifebuoys to its future outcomes to float it to success. Its main signifier is identity and meshed within its chain are words like values, beliefs, citizen, democracy and fair. It represents what our Federal Parliament and its Education Committee have decided what will constitute the profile of an educated person in the 21st century.

It is a teacher who will make the difference to a flat tuneless curriculum plan. I stand at the brink as translator and Mediator deciding upon which language to use and refuse, which actions to mount or discard, persuasions to portray or deny, and

which view of the Symbolic to be incorporated or spurned. Aoki speaks of the quality of life lived within the tensionality, depends much on the quality of the pedagogical being she is (2005, p. 161). She is the teacher.

Teachers can determine the success or failure of plans but I say this in terms of an education that confirms and enhances uniqueness and being. When I enter a classroom, holding my planning diary, my presence will initiate a transformation of a sociocultural and physical environment. This is a powerful and influential position to find oneself in. What are my intentions in this room? To what do I orient myself? I orient myself to the books, the red plastic chair and the grey laminated desk. Within my presence they become the objects of my intention to teach. I am in the presence of others as a Self but I do not look at the environment any more even though I am aware of red plastic chairs and grey laminated desks. I begin my understandings and translation. I bring forth my Mediations and wisdom to fabricate a fecundity of possibility in the transformation of a formal curriculum (Aoki, 2005, p. 159).

My pedagogical understanding is transforming as it unfolds, provokes and evokes a complex, vibrant living experience for students within the room and I know my students. I am between two horizons—the Real and the Symbolic. It is a teacher who sets quality. It is she who might create an oasis or allow a descent into chaos with her understanding of lives within a classroom. Her pedagogical understandings underpin her commencement (Aoki, 2005, p. 161). I now discuss the tensionality, the Void and what might be the undercurrents that guide delivery of a process. How should this student, this human being, be exposed to a world, a symbolic world?

Tensionality? A tension, a string prepared to cause flight to an arrow, a violin string poised to become a propellant of joy. This is tension whereby there is a pause before the event and there is a potential in this pause. It is the vibrant and vibrating as

the energy of potential. Quality of life experiences is the potential energy for her students and her, and all her understandings and knowing must be brought to bear if she launches her arrows. Without an understanding of life, a teacher might only implement a plan and without deep understanding of pedagogy, a teacher has little tensionality. What would happen with the implementation of a plan? If there is a technical implementer of an externally prepared plan, then a teacher becomes a mechanical processor, devoid of the humanity, which is inherent in a process such as education of human beings (Aoki, 2005, p. 163).

A teacher operates, in a classroom, with the present, future and past temporal understandings and between each there is tensionality. Within a class, it is not just the giving of instruction but the hearing of student voices and *White Noise* of a curriculum. It is with understanding and compassion that a teacher moves beyond a static mode of acceptance and compliance to the spirited adventure of dynamic being. Understanding her students, gives depth to her skills and wisdom as she begins to undertake her curriculum presentation.

Living curriculum leaves behind the curriculum as plan when a “good” teacher comes into presence in a classroom. How do I understand my students? What is it that I must understand?

My experience, as a teacher, leads me to understand that there are ways of being and acting that are hierarchical, in nature, within the classroom and that there is a clear goal, which I, as teacher, am to achieve.

Education is seen in terms of the creation of particular identities—the lifelong learner, the good citizen, the high-achieving student and in terms of the creation of a competitive, stable and successful social order (Biesta, 2006, p. 99). I return to the

term socialisation again as it makes its presence felt through the notion of “social order” requirements. Social order is a place where people understand each other’s language and have shared meanings of appropriate ways of being. An order might be hierarchical with position being determined by politics, class, economics, gender or race. An order has divisions (Peters & Biesta, 2009, p. 98). Society has an order of people, structured according to particular patterns or methods. If my identity has been created and I fit a particular part of the order, then I must understand the rules and parameters that govern that order. Thus, to become a part of a rational community, I must acquire accepted behaviours, language, knowledge, skills and values (Biesta, 2006, p. 67). If I am to become a fully-fledged member of this community, I must acquire the subtleties of social meaning and language and I must understand those rules and rewards, which are associated with conformity.

There are rules in how to play a game. I talk of games. Games involve people. People must understand what the rules are as the game cannot be played as an anarchical activity. Games have players. Players have roles. Players learn how to relate to other players. There are things you don’t do. The aim is to be a winner not a loser. Teachers tell students that it is all about the game but they know the secret about which they will not be explicit. They know what happens when you are always last in a race. Valued knowledge is about not just playing the game but knowing how to play. Success is the aim. A look, a nod, a soft sigh can convey acceptance. Hans Georg Gadamer tells me that every game has its own proper spirit but even this does not refer to the mood of those who play the games (2004, pp. 106-107).

This process happens in less obvious ways than just that of the formal curriculum and through the Hidden Curriculum, a politically incorrect ethos of inequality might be perpetuated, secretly and unnamed. This inequality can be felt and acknowledged

through a vague sense that some students seem to get all the resources while those who do not understand the complexities of the game or do not manifest the “right” being, will sit outside of the circle, wondering why the balance does not favour them.

Concealing a Curriculum

In a classroom, games are played as an integral part of the Hidden Curriculum. School is a place where social games are played every day. Students understand, only too well, what the rules are and what is required so they might achieve success. Teachers understand the rules and if they don’t, there are ways by which this might be policed—disapproval, ignoring, transfer from a school.

I invite you to look back at my classroom with the red plastic chair and note the positioning of a school and its contents. There are classrooms within a school, which is an architecturally structured space. Imagine if students went to any part of the school where they wanted at whatever time they wished. There are two problems with this. One is the duty of care that teachers have for students and that would become highly problematic, as, without control, they could be anywhere. Secondly, because there is a formal curriculum that must be taught and tested, there are specific times and places for this to occur—it is organised. Bells ring and people move on command. Students learn structure. Students move into a room that contains red plastic chairs, bought through government funding. Teacher stands at front of class. What might a student learn from this? Teacher has control of what is about to happen in the classroom as they hold the curriculum—students do not hold the curriculum and their input has not been requested. Thus control comes through an authoritative figure at the front of the classroom.

This figure has knowledge, which is about to be imparted to students who lack this knowledge (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 134). This figure has skills and values that are to be shared with others. A valuable currency is within her hands.

Language brings curriculum into subjecthood. Through the use of appropriate linguistic symbols, the formal curriculum is announced to a classroom of students. A real teacher stands in front of real students in a real classroom. The curriculum is given life and with this gift of life, comes a curriculum that will not be heralded in formality as it will not be spoken of nor will not be visible as a tangible structure unlike my hard copy of a formal curriculum. It will, instead, provoke and deny, promote and reject and it will reward and punish. How can these things happen? Surely, you say that it is possible to see this entire happening in a classroom. I suggest, that if you do not understand the subtle rules of the game, then you might not understand. Students, if they are to survive, learn this invisible network of assumptions that establish the boundaries of legitimacy (Apple, 2004, p. 82). Michael Apple, in his book *Ideology and Curriculum*, broadens my understanding of the “hiddenness” of this curriculum as it encourages internalisation of mores and values of political and social institutions—enacted within education.

Beyond the term “subjectivisation”, I sense a danger when real students become recipients of language representing the Symbolic Order, the Big Other and they learn the game that is played and the rules by which it happens. Might this be ominous? I hesitate to say that learning the game is necessarily bad as playing by the rules might earn some rewards and I, for one, like rewards. I like to belong and I have a desire to be a part of society. Students will be no less desiring of belonging to groups. When they leave school, they might also wish to belong economically, politically and

socially. Complete with an understanding of the rules and how the game is played, belonging is a possibility.

Zizek says that it is in the Void, before subjectivisation, that Self might be asserted (in Myers, 2003,p37) and might choose symbols that are pleasing. Self might choose to hear and understand a rule but determines to incorporate it into her way of being without it becoming one of the parameters of being. Danger then is implicit when understanding of rules is limited or refused and when social mores are rejected or ignored. Danger is cloaked in not belonging and becoming a misfit, drop out or a rebel. Danger can be in the misinterpretation of language. Danger can become tangible as subjecthood confers disempowerment, a secondary status, lack of access to resources and political status.

A Hidden Curriculum is insidiously played out in classrooms. The culture of a school is frequently strongly reflected in Hidden Curriculum. Messages of the Hidden Curriculum concern issues of gender, race, class, teamwork and fair play, authority, school knowledge, and environmental awareness, among others. The Hidden Curriculum sends messages to students about who can succeed in what tasks, who has the right to make decisions and what kinds of knowledge are legitimate, inferior or superior. Through using the term “hidden” in describing an aspect of curriculum, I come to understand that there is a curriculum that is not made obvious to us. I see that formal curriculum comes with a set of unspoken assumptions and these might permeate and lend themselves to describing a Hidden Curriculum. Aoki refers to the things that are unspoken and assumed but not made clear. He discusses ways whereby a Hidden Curriculum might be played out in a classroom when he asks about those who wrote the formal curriculum (2005, p. 10). The idea of

“hiddenness” obscures the faceless planners and their social and political assumptions as these are subsumed within the layers of the formal curriculum.

Factors of note in the Hidden Curriculum are gender messages, fair play, and authority and, perhaps the one that is most relevant is who succeeds and has the most rights plus what is viewed as superior or inferior. The messages are subtle and they are “hidden” as it is the relationships between people, the reactions of people, and the unspoken discriminatory thoughts that can be part of a teacher’s experience. It is the behaviours that are deemed appropriate for some and not for others. It is those who do not receive the rewards because their action was perceived to be inferior. I see a seesaw of success. It is the times that disrespect receives teacher attention. It is when a classroom is changed so that boys’ behaviours might be more easily accommodated. It is when the teacher gives attention to boys behaving badly. It is when female teachers are ignored by an administration that seeks only their own success and congratulations. The messages are given and the clamour is stark to the ears of the students as they learn their value in a classroom, their importance in an education world and within politico/social hierarchy. I uncover a veiled nature of Hidden Curriculum as a pervasive and insidious thing as education becomes a perpetuation of economic, social and political disadvantages for women and girls.

This process happens in less obvious ways than just that of the formal curriculum—it is through the Hidden Curriculum that the politically incorrect *ethos* of inequality might be perpetuated, secretly and unnamed.

White Noise Curriculum

I walk into the classroom. Immediately I feel the air. Nobody speaks. Students occupy red seats at grey laminate tables. No one stands or moves. I sense a tone. No noise is heard. No voice is active.

I understand the sentiment of tone. It is a situation where the lesson-allocated time is constructive or there will be eruptions of dissonance. The tone resonates with all the room's inhabitants yet many are unconscious that the tone encroaches upon how they are being in the school classroom as they are seated on red plastic chairs at grey laminated tables.

The *White Noise Curriculum* is operational—disquieting or reassuring.

Imagine the colour white. In actuality, white is composed of a spectrum of colour—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. I cannot see those colours and I only see white. To see those colours I will need some means of splitting them, diffracting them. I need an external object such as a prism to cause each wavelength to move at a different speed through it and only then can the different wavelengths become obvious—the rainbow of colour.

Imagine sound, which is caused by a disturbed vibrating object. This disturbed vibrating object causes the particles surrounding it to become part of a pressure wave, composed of compressions and rarefactions. It is a longitudinal wave and has no crests or troughs. The human ear will perceive the fluctuations in pressure as sound. Sound is measured in Hertz where one Hertz equals one vibration per second—frequency. Some sounds are pleasing to the human ear. If there are several sounds, with a difference between them above seven Hertz, and they are being

caused simultaneously, then I can detect a complex wave pattern that results from the interference and superposition of the two sound waves. I can like this sound.

Intensity of sound is important too. This can be determined as the amount of energy moving past a point in a given amount of time. Sound is a form of energy. It causes displacement of the air particles or those of whatever medium through which it passes. It cannot pass through a vacuum. Sound vibrations disturb but as they move through the particles, they lose energy and therefore intensity. We humans have hearing, which allows us to hear sounds of a very low frequency of which we are sometimes conscious. The intensity of the sound stimulates hearing.

If sound is caused by a range of disturbances, but still within a difference of a given range of Hertz, it can be interpreted as *white noise*. This frequency and amplitude of the sound is regular and can almost become a flat spectrum of sound with similar range of amplitude. Imagine a flat line, with a wave drawn closely to it. The wave diverges only slightly from the line and the divergence is constant. This sound can be perceived as a hum, a sensation, or a pleasure. Adversely, it can be ominous and disconcerting.

Thus the *white noise* permeates the classroom. Who is the disturbed object? By what means has this disturbance occurred? Has the means been an argument? Has the disturbed object had breakfast? Is the cause sadness or joy?

Whatever the source, I sense *white noise*, a mask and there is a source of this noise, this disturbance.

A student is a human who is being in a classroom. This being cannot be only what is made manifest. It cannot be a sum of work completed and tests passed. There is more than one student in the room and there is also a teacher. What disturbances have impacted upon the beings? What is causing a tone to be cast? Imperceptible

sensations permeate the atmosphere and are perceived by others. Sensations have the power to intrude and sway. These sensations operate within silence.

Differences within the classroom can be likened to variations in intensity of disturbance. Clair Colebrook, in her book *Understanding Deleuze*, (2002, p. 87) discusses how Gilles Deleuze viewed the concept of intensity, which he expresses as an experience, a feeling, a perception but one, which might not be temporarily or spatially recognisable. This is how I have used a new idea for a curriculum that is present in a school and I call it the *White Noise Curriculum*.

I further the discussion of intensity through my understanding of a person and knowing a human is not just a fixed body as they have styles of being through their movement, speech, facial expression and style of dress. These ways of being might form a complex white noise as it flows, invading corners and infiltrating minds.

Why do I select the concept of *white noise* to describe an operational curriculum? I have different beings within a class. Their intensity of being varies immensely. For some, it is inherently a noisy way whilst for others it is silent. Some students are intensely focused on their immediate environment whilst others flutter their thoughts to the outside world. What I see is not always what is. I don't know what happens to each student outside of my immediate sphere unless I am informed either factually or as a confrontation. The intensity of *white noise* might be emitted by one student but detected by many. *White noise* can mask opposite vibrations, and, thus it subverts through intensity. Voices operating in a classroom, with a similar frequency where none can be identified from another by our auditory senses, become a flat spectrum. This, too, is but requires that there is no identifiable source. However, the difference between vocal *white noise* and the silent *white noise* of tone is palpable.

The aurally silent *white noise* has, as its source, an internalised disturbance—it is an unquiet mind full of sounds, thoughts, ideas and fleeting images. Internalisation does not necessarily allow for articulation or, perhaps, the person is unable to communicate. *White noise* has enough power to upset stability of an environment.

There is a similarity between the *white noise* of sound and the *white noise* of image. *Gestalten* is a word that could be used to describe the sound as well as the image. *Gestalten* comes from *gestalt* which is a structure, arrangement or pattern of physical, biological or psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by a summation of its parts (Meriam Webster Dictionary).

So, the phenomena of a student can, observationally and visually be a functional unit and the sensations perceived by the observer are invisible to the ear and the eye yet they exist in parts and are unable to be separated. The external is indistinguishable from the norm but the internal is segmented into unquiet events.

My concept of *white noise* as a driver of what happens in the classroom is just a line of flight I have taken as I wander through the dark corners of education. Colebrook (2002, p. xxvii) exposes words used by Deleuze as he wondered and wrote on philosophy. His term of “nomadology”—the freedom to roam and create new territories is applicable. My territory and my freedom to roam must be into the realms of educating. I will confide that it is a contradiction to my more linear operations as a Science teacher but I confess that this rigidity does not ride well with a phenomenological inquiry so I only show a little of that Self at certain times such as when I discuss a formal education in all its glory.

The silence of girls' voices remains while there is a frequency of *white noise* disturbance of quiet desperation to have a voice and to address the internalised disquiet.

I conclude this chapter by recalling the types of curriculum that are tangible, unspoken or invisible within a classroom. All three combine as education happens and no one type can be singular in its impact. It is not possible to sterilise a classroom, remove ways of being from humans, and ignore a variety of identities. It is not possible for a Self to not be present in a classroom, when, subjecthood has been conferred upon an individual. It is not possible that I, as teacher, am an unsocialised being. It is possible, however, that there are protagonists whose desire to belong in a hegemonic social sphere, become prominent in their pronouncement of presence. It is also possible that protagonists who wish to belong assume the pre-existing notions of gaining rewards that might be denied them, should they reject the rational community.

A classroom, as a social and educational structure, is immensely powerful and influential in the production of future players in a game of belonging and each (Barone, 2000,p192) Self who is present has a role to play in the curriculum and in the school.

This leads into my next chapter where I search for understanding of Self and what it might mean as it presents in society and in education. Primarily, this next chapter is one of disclosure and contemplation.

Chapter 6: Manifolds of Self

We never show up to ourselves in our world as just one more thing: we stand out, each of us, as central, as the agents of our intentional life, as the one who has our world and the things in it given to him. Our power or disclosure, our being the dative of manifestation for things that appear, introduces us into the life of reason and the human way of being.

Robert Sokolowski

I have a story to tell. It is mine. I want to share my story, as when I try to make meaning of my worlds, I need understanding as to who I am at this time. I did not start my life as who I am now, as the myriad of identities I show in my life worlds.

I cannot look at a phenomenon and see it through one lens. I can name the phenomenon at which I am looking but as with anything that involves human beings and our life worlds, nothing is simplistic.

I am trying to understand education and where human beings fit within it. I, as a unique individual am not one-dimensional. In my present guise of female human, I produce my past ghosts and introduce them into this present world. Why ghosts, you might ask? Because, however I am now, there are patterns and imprints upon me. Some are elusive while others are closer to my surface. I come to this thesis as a manifold subject and in order for my truth to prevail and for my efforts to invoke empathy and understanding from others, I must summon my ghosts of history and allow these spectres to be woven into my story to enrich and enhance my

presentation of Self. Sokolowski says that one and the same thing is given to us in new and varied ways as its being is enhanced through the enriching presentation of manifolds (2000, p. 86).

I am about to enter into a space of disclosure where I am within a life world and the world that surrounds me can be explained in my terms as mine. I translate objects that manifest themselves to me. To do this, I use language. I can identify objects within this world and, in order to relate or develop a shared meaning, I use language as symbols of meaning.

In his book, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, Donald Polkinghorne assists me to understand the value of human narrative in research. Temporally, I am present and whatever I am about to relate regarding my historicity is past (1988, p. 133). However, I recall what has happened and using my understandings of now, I place my recounting of the past into an order that might allow for clarity. Writing my story allows me to have time to reflect and think. As a human being, I am presenting these events to the world. It is I who is using data and I am translating these events so they might be tasted upon an empathetic palate of others.

In writing my thesis, I can confidently attest to a transforming sense of deeper moral understanding. Even as I continue writing, in this chapter, I experience new insights into the Self that I disclose to my reader. I reveal an understanding of who I am at this very point of writing. Who is this Self? What intentions might I have towards the objects that are within my experience? How might I express my history? What language might I choose? Does language as symbols act as a signifier of meaning or understandings? What do I wish to convey?

I am my existence, which includes what I have done, what I am doing and what I will do, and each moment is part of the whole that I am (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 131).

I am immersed in this thesis as protagonist and as *raconteur* of educational experiences. There is something in the aphorism, “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women, merely players.” An education life world is just that. I am one player, a protagonist in a particular play. Others are girls and boys, teachers and parents. The stage of education holds a big world, upon which is performed social, political and traditional mores of the Symbolic Order. The stories operating within the world of education amplify its magnitude and affect the encounters and actions of the players into its world. It is even bigger than that because layers of lives can emerge from elsewhere to manipulate the inner school world where players sit and work. The layers come from diversity and from uniqueness, from different age groups and from diverse wants.

It is impossible to remain uninvolved and isolated from happenings around me. Each of us is a fragment of our milieu, which casts its influence upon all within it. Before my story, I first reflect upon notions of trust, authenticity, judgement, dialogue and courage. If I am going to speak of me as a being within my environment, I wish to do so in an atmosphere of trust, which is not clouded by judgements. I want to show myself as authentic within my life and I offer dialogue with my reader so you might come to understand me and respect the courage to be my moral me and to open Self to others, to remove a Self from isolation and bring her forth into this thesis.

As I offer an idea of similarity between my life as a girl and experiences of girls in the 21st century, I frame my inquiry by asking about the kind of world that allows a girl to discard her Self and work to sculpt herself for external approval. I wonder as

to a world whereby a girl might be rejected if she does not fit “feminine” and “girl” symbols, where Self is irrelevant but compliance to the Symbolic Order of socialised gender is pivotal to her future wellbeing. The subsuming of Self to the approval of the Symbolic Order is not new and I question large ideas through returning to my own story as a comparison to a lived world of a girl of the 21st century as she, just as I ask, asks, “What do you want of me?” (Myers, 2003, p. 31).

The Fantasy and Anamorphosis

My life experience as a girl and my adult awareness, leads me to believe that girls learn quickly that male approval is their “Holy Grail”—the ultimate discovery that will fill them with the elixir of life and meaning. As I have discussed through many pages before this page, Media and society objectify women, portray them as a body part, and remove personality from the dream image and this impacts upon the Self-realisation of millions of girls. As a woman who was once a girl, I might interpret this in this way.

Ugly is bad! Beautiful is good! Ugly is a loser! Beauty is a winner! You ugly? Then you had better become more beautiful—sculpt it, paint it, cover it, mold it, give, submit! You beautiful? Not good enough, paint it, sculpt it, bare it, cover it, give, and submit! So I would find my answer to, “What do you want of me?”

Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 99) speaks of fantasy and desire whereby a person can be led to believe that they desire something through image or words or both. This fantasy becomes frantically sought after—hence the slavish and gratuitous actions with which some people construct their lives. Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 98) talks of *anamorphosis* as an image, which is distorted and is only recognisable from a particular angle. Should I reflect upon a girl as she begins her journey into adulthood,

I might see *anamorphosis* as what Advertising and Media rely on when they wish to present a contrived, sexualised female (Carstaphen & Zavoina, 1999, p. 156). How clever are Media and Advertising as they ensure that the angle providing for the distortion is the Angle of Insecurity.

Constancy of exposure to such messages promotes a remorselessly powerless position in which to be. A situation that demands a denial of personality and a relentless pursuit of impossibility can only cause deep distress as insecurities are probed and pricked by Media bombardment. An *anamorphosis* technique can be declared a success if a woman crumbles and succumbs to a fantasy of beautiful, desirability and success.

Naomi Wolf (1990) in her book, *The Beauty Myth*, speaks of the objectification of women by Media and Advertising. Wolf refers to the indication by research that women would prefer to lose ten or fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal (1990, p. 10). An operational currency system assures girls that their currency of image and denial of Self, will establish them in the real world, hence the almost demonic approach to body beautification and the huge success of the fashion and cosmetic industry. To be beautiful is to achieve—a myth and a sad, futile goal for so many young women. Further study of Wolf's work is not my intention but I mention her approach to the myth of beauty as something that all women are encouraged to strive towards as they seek a fantastical perfection of body and face. Through living such a fantasy there comes a payment of power sublimation as a female to a masculine patriarchal control. This is an unknown payment and one, which we are not, informed of until caught by the web of fantasy, understanding becomes a reality when the impossibility of this beauty myth finally dawns upon her. Wolf's research

is mainly of women who have been in pursuit of the myth. I ask what happens to girls who are at the beginning of the female pursuit continuum?

Mary Pipher (1994, p.52) likens adolescence to the area between forest and grassland where there are all sorts of possibilities but finally one becomes definitely another clime, an area of potent wealth. This she likens to adolescence and adulthood where the former is the “undefined” area with aspects of adulthood just emerging but not taking hold. It is here for the adolescent, that the possibilities are almost infinite but the confusion laid upon a girl can be such that the pervasive and powerful messages received can cause a negative and stultifying mindset that could, without positive reinforcement of her personal worth, continue on into adulthood. Can adolescence be thought of as a Void? Zizek (in Myer, 2012, p.27) talks of the Void as a place before subjectivisation and I see this as a place before the Symbolic Order defines her as girl or woman.

What do the girls need to become adult women? What behaviours are needed? How do they become successful and happy? What are the pointers? Who will reward them for achievements? What are the desired achievements? Who defines these ways of being? Why are there ways that woman must be so she might belong to the rational community? I speak, in Chapter Two, of the parameters and expectations that are associated with feminine and, these symbolic constructs do not require rational or moral thought as, within their historicity, they have become all-powerful in providing cultural and social guideposts for woman and girls. Equally powerful are the enforcers of compliance and consistency as they act to ensure we maintain a stable community at all costs.

Externalised influences of popular culture and Media, as supported by desire for financial gain in a capitalist society, lay down parameters and ways of being for girls.

Pipher discusses the view that girls, instead of being their true Self, become “seeming”. At no time can they display their true selves, their aspirations, their wants, needs and goals. It is gradually sacrificed on the altar of the golden goal of “seeming” (1994, pp. 19-23). They will seem to be sexy and fashionable and beautiful. They will seem to enjoy taking second place to male wishes. They will seem to not mind being derided or harassed. They will accept that this is how things are. The fantasy window that Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 102) speaks of is covered with a desire for the unattainable, which becomes disappointing and hurtful, as the more one desires a fantasy, the less accessible it seems to become as the window of desire clouds over. I suggest that this illusionary image in all its distortions, remains a primary goal of unrequited desire, just dangling out of reach, so one more diet, one more cut might make that fantasy possible. Media conspires to create fantasy that supports perpetuation of a serious fraud against girls. Pipher discusses what happens to girls when they believe that real Self has no currency and to be involved in social transactions, it becomes necessary to develop a currency that is dependent upon external validation, as in subjectivisation. She also talks of the frailty of a false Self—an elevated Self used for currency—as to be exposed as a fraud brings extreme devaluation and bewilderment as a girl begins again to seek out what is wanted of her (1994, p. 37).

As I write this, I feel a profound sadness for an enormous, as yet undiscovered loss to society. The loss extends beyond an individual who does not achieve a wholeness of her own Self. It goes further into a generational mindset whereby the girls become women still in pursuit of the “Unholy Grail” of external approval and validation. It becomes an inherent aspect of society when those girls grow into women, still affected by a fantasy and still guided by the Symbolic Order.

Zizek (in Myers, 2003, p. 44) poses the idea that the Self is open to constant revision as it constructs its reality in a symbolic universe, a place where, as human beings we live. I find myself in agreement but to open oneself to revision demands a great deal from a woman who might not understand her own value as an authentic Self.

Self as an Agent of Truth

Here I recall Sokolowski's wisdom. I wonder how possible it is to be an agent of truth when I am at the centre of my narrative, constructing a particular view of the world for others. I want my thoughts and feelings to compel the imagination of others. At the same time, I want my agency to be trustworthy and valid. I do not want a false Self to become my face to the world. I am afraid that I could not manage such a façade. I see what the popular culture wants me to be. I should show no signs of age and I should be trendy (in a dignified way) and show no grey hair. I should have smooth skin with no wrinkles but if I do I should have them filled with substances like body filler. I should have my imperfections cut away and be refined into an approved format from an external thing. My body should be vibrant and young and most importantly, it should be slim! The influences of age and the etchings of experience can be cut away and the validity of my life can be negated by a surgeon's knife or Revlon's cosmetics.

I pride myself of not being too influenced by such cultural pursuits any more but much of what has been absorbed over the years has stuck and I still am a victim to external approval in some aspects of my life—the importance of superficial beauty. I am rather contented with my Self and seeking external approval for that is not part of

my life—I am optimistic and I am extremely resilient. I am pleased that being burnt at the stake is not an option for an older wise woman anymore (Pipher, 1994, p. 26).

My thoughts of an individual authenticity and the accompanying power within that Self for all females originates in my historicity as a girl who grew up in a situation where to be male was to be important in the family and thus, to be the receiver of attention and reward. To be female was to be the one who was expected to marry another farmer, preferably wealthy, and a being considered to be genetically and socially skilled in house work and nurturing babies. My narratives about what it is to be a girl, and about what it is to cross into young womanhood then into full womanhood are sources from which my voice, the voice of a female teacher, interprets Zizek's Symbolic Order within my phenomenological inquiry.

A Little Girl's Tale

I begin with a tale of a little girl. I present some facts but I am also providing an emotion to accompany the time line as I can offer you some notion as to how that girl felt.

I left the farm and my home the year I turned eleven. I headed off to College—a naive, very innocent little girl. Boarding School was where I had been dreaming of being—all those wonderful boarding school tales and I had an older sister there so I was safe.

What happened? I won three scholarships to be there—a bit of a smart girl but totally “cotton-balled” and protected from a more worldly culture into which I was going. I thought I was clever and wonderful—I knew I could do anything.

It is very difficult to write about this because it was a life-changing experience that has haunted me for my life. Haunted is the word I choose because it has been

like the ghosts of what I might have been whirling and twisting through my life but never actually manifesting a positive outcome. These ghosts constantly taunted my reality with a sense of unworthiness and a lack of value—who was I to suppose that I could do anything?

I imagined about things that had been. Where did the actress go? Where were my ballet shoes? Where was my joy at being? I had pined, yearned to be on the stage but I soon gained a sense of what was expected of me.

Boarding school teaches many lessons and one of those is that one must fit in—My little innocent shadow followed me, occasionally manifested but usually pushed aside in case vulnerability should be perceived and pierced.

In hindsight, I see a little girl who needed a support base, someone who would encourage and support her worth, someone who loved the loud, vibrant person she was—full of “I am going to be someone”. I only went home on holidays.

Who delivered the verdict on my worth? What gave me value? How did I feel about myself? Who pronounced sentence on the soul who sought to hide the fact that just being like everyone else wasn't what she really wanted?

I thought I was great. I thought I had talents. I knew I had a sense of humour and I knew I could play sport. I knew these things.

But I spoke out; I was naughty; I coated myself in a slather of disdain and loud behaviour—look at me! Please look at me! See what is there!

The tragic unforgettable moment of my schooling was when I was the only person in my year group besides those who really did lack personality and such, when I was overlooked for a leadership position. All my friends made it and I had to live a whole year, knowing that I had been relegated to the pits of personality, talent and potential. In hindsight, I guess you could say I read all the messages wrongly or

else refused to accept them. So when I asked society what it wanted of me, a blurry answer was perceived in my mind.

Reflection on a Little Girl's Tale

My life has been coloured by this—I let “the school” define my sense of worth. There was no sense of worth, of value or confidence so I sought the lowest common denominator and became the leader of those groups because I had been deemed unworthy to be amongst the elite. These groups were where the unpopular or socially inadequate gathered for some kind of peer support. I have my teachers to thank for this—from them I learnt who I was and what I could and couldn't do. So, a lingering sadness overtook me and burdened me for many years. Should one be bothered to take a moment and consider these years, they could see the progress was always aimed low but I succeeded at those levels.

Such is the power of the adults in society and such is the power of the teachers.

I have passed over those things now and am building myself a life—one in which I define my worth not where I am looking for someone else to. I don't need teachers, parents, peers or men to define me anymore.

Who gives us our sense of worth? Who do we let define us? Why let this happen? How much power do we have in the decision? Does it mean we are weak? Does it mean that other people always define our reality? What power do we have to change? What gives us the power to change? When does this power happen? When do we need it to happen? Why do we immerse ourselves in our lack of worth? Is this an excuse for our weakness?

Hindsight is powerful—but it is done with a sense of age and experience.

Should my peers have defined me? Should my mother have stepped in and said, “Enough! Let her be!” My mother was absent and only visited on holidays. My

father had no interest in me. My definers were my teachers and the significant adults were dismissive of my Self. I feel that this Self was not a conforming Self and was perhaps outside of what their view was of a successful girl. Thus, I was a failure as a girl and thus deemed to be less.

How do the girls of today survive? How do they get past the external defining? These days they have even greater impacts on their lives—not only do adults have preconceived ideas about what is good and right but the Media defines them and through this they have a so strong influence given by their male counterparts who clearly have their views of what is good defined by Media and society.

I see such confusion when we live in a world of Advertising and sales, as women and girls must learn that their worth is levelled towards being consumed—consumed by Media and the Symbolic Order.

When I was that girl, I did what my peers did—sport and socialising. I knew that my popularity revolved around looking good and having boys complement that. That was major.

Confusion!

The boys didn't give me true value—they didn't give me that leadership which was aching inside me. They gave me recognition and some level of acceptance.

This is my story and this is a manifold of my Self. Within the story, lie the echoes and stories of other little girls—unsure and confused. Where indeed did the ballet shoes go? My confusion and insecurity are no more or no less than that of others—they just are mine. Popularity requirements are still important but more hotly contested today as the Media targets the vulnerabilities of girls, turning them into

puppets for life, always wondering if they are pretty enough, slim enough, good enough or if they will have true definition through the gaining of a partner.

Deflecting Fantasy

What do girls have today? Be beautiful, be thin, be accepted, be popular, be what the Media tells us all is going to get us success. Then what is this success? Is success measured by the views of everyone and everything else? How hard do these girls have to work to take on everyone's views? Who can help her define and accept that she is worthwhile? Who can value her as a person? As her own person? Where does it all start? Where are the people who see our value and our talents and our potential? And who tells us?

I find a fascination in re-reading all questions asked as they all request an external validation from someone or something out there. Before that little girl steps into an adult world, her questioning, her hysteria invites parameters to be imposed upon her "woman"(Myers, 2012, p.95). The Symbolic Order appoints certain language to proclaim her. The enforcers of compliance punish her lack of conformity and she learns that there are ways to encourage one out of the Real and into "woman".

The influence of this stage of life is pervasive and enduring, as portrayed through my story. It doesn't all just go away. Even as strength is gained, those fundamental aspects of our stories pierce our confidence and throw us into momentary disarray. It is, however, a stage from which to grow. Human beings spend their lives defining and re-defining themselves, growing into and out of situations, developing strength and confidence and losing it. It is a liquid motion of life with a tide ebbing and flowing around us and with us as part of it. Should we assume to be static in our life narrative, it might mean that time and space would cease to exist. Change is a fact.

Life exists and changes, physiologically and emotionally. I would thus, not assume, that a human being is as they were at twenty. Life does not allow this.

Dative of my World

As dative of ways of being, I disclose things to you so that you might come to understand a part of my manifold Self. The little girl grew up and became a teacher.

I intend to interpret this notion of Self through delving into exactly what I understand this term to mean. Look! I have given “it” a name, a word is associated with this notion. I am taken in by Descartes and his actions as he attempts to discern what it might mean to have a Self (Myers, 2003, p.31). On a very cold day, colder than cold, he withdraws into his very large stove, where he spends many hours contemplating his disconnection from the world and being alone as just him. He can see nothing else and his world is one of darkness with no terms of reference by which he can determine his reality. An interesting activity? If there is nothing else, what is his reality? Is he real? He determines that he is thinking, having thoughts about his state of being and thus his reality is assured. He calls this *cogito*—cognisance of awareness, cognisance of a Self, of an ‘I’ (Meyers, 2003, p.31).

It would seem then, that Descartes truly Is, as determined by his thinking. Thus, it is thought then, that gives us our reality. Thinking, having thoughts using consciousness, inclines me to believe that this could be so.

A teacher does exist but before that person is a teacher, they are a person—personalised, individualised, humanised and unique. Van Manen (1990, p. 89) discusses this conversion as a movement from Self through pedagogical understanding, into teacher. Genetics confers uniqueness and experience bestows

distinctiveness. A teacher is multi-layered and multi-facted. A teacher has a past, relationships and experiences that all existed and permeated her narrative before she entered a classroom. A teacher has an essence of humanity and she is genetically, physically and intellectually recognisably human . She now has a career which is also a role. Perhaps it might be considered as a maturity of a Self and a growth in her building of pedagogical understanding. Contemplating a teacher and struggling to consider me as teacher instigates an investigation of my commitment to a purpose, my exploration and awareness of Self as a Self and Self as a teacher.

I would like to begin to explore what it is that I actually consider to be my Self and where I put this into my thesis. I consider myself as an individual and, at this time, I have not converted to my teacher role. I do not require teacher pedagogy to make meaning of the environment I currently inhabit. However, I can draw upon my teacher pedagogical understanding to attempt to help me derive meaning from these writings by Max van Manen.

Why do I wish to write about Self? To what purpose am I doing this?

Who is this Self that I am considering or, more to the point, what is this Self that I am considering?

I am conscious of my being. My consciousness is reflective regarding my being within the world. Jean Paul Sartre, as one phenomenological philosopher discussed by as discussed by Christopher Macann, in his book, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty* (1993, p. 114) considers this being and consciousness to exist as a dualism where being is “me” and consciousness is “I” and “I” cannot exist without “me”. I consider that I am able to reflect upon my being, my physicality of my consciousness but for my consciousness

to reflect upon itself would not be possible. This impossibility of action is likened to a camera lens looking at itself. This self-reflection is an attempt to pin down Self, reflect carefully upon it and describe it—I am it. Utilising a verb, “am” presupposes that there is an action associated with “I”. Could it be then that I is being? I, me, these reactions and thoughts emanate from the mind that is within my body. They are the experiences of a mind within a body that belongs to me. Thus my being carries my consciousness. Whoever sits outside this tight relationship is an Other. It is not I.

When I consider a situated Self, it would be a body and a mind that is present—it is a body, a being and a physicality, conscious of place and Self. It is an historical, gendered, experiential, sleepy, intellectual, mother, teacher, daughter, sister, friend, and a happy, sad, emotional Self. It cannot be reduced to a scientific law, a psychological law or a simple biological existence (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 114). My inventory might be boundless. I am not one detail at all times. This entity has a temporal and spatial existence. Thus I am temporally and spatially situated somewhere. I am present in this world—it is me that is here. This is where I am. This is when I am. I exist in time, in a space, as a body who is in relationship to their surroundings. My actions are not simply a reflection of my desires. Should my actions be guided only by desire, it might be presupposed that I operated as a child who has yet to develop a sense of fairness and justice.

Disclosing my Self

Located in a place, a situation, then I am accompanied by all that is me—thoughts, emotions and experiences. I do not isolate them and, as an integral part of my Self, my “me”, the “I”, they are with me and I am the embodiment of my Self.

Can the Self be broken down into bits and pieces, like a car with a motor taken apart? Can I separate out all the parts that are composite for the whole? Must I name them up (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 32)?

I am a teacher. I am a female human. These are embodiments. They are not the Self as Self cannot be caught, trapped, placed in a cage and described in clear and concise terms. My Self will relive experiences. It will shout with joy when worlds laugh. It will weep sad tears when realms collide. You see a physical manifestation of these emotions—the tears, the joyous shout. It is the reactions that my Self has and it might be deep scars that are being stroked or poked. It is the tickle of an action upon the soft skin of an experience that has been had by me, by my Self.

When I enter a room in my role as teacher, I bring these experiences along with me. Some are carefully packed securely into life's suitcase, some are exposed upon a human visage and some are carved into the abyss of my mind. They are present as I, too, am embodied in my body as present. My consciousness cannot be present without my being.

The ability to say I and to intervene in the world through a responsible act depends on the organic life that underlies thinking, the organic life in which the act of thinking is embodied, but it is not just that organic life; it enters into the space of reasons and the kingdom of ends"

(Sokolowski, 2000, p 121)

Should I try to discuss myself as simply human? Should I use the terms of a human Self? Should I do this, I might suppose that humans have a commonality with Self and yet, the very purpose of exploring the notion of a Self, is to make it individual, a singularity, a unique oneness, thus individualising from other selves.

And yet, the singularity is reliant upon being identified by an Other. Using the term Other, then denotes a difference, a distinction, a originality as, Other is separate.

Other then observes but to observe Other, they must be observing something, which in this case is my embodied Self—a visual image, a visual manifestation of my Self. Teacher Self denotes an identity in a certain way and it is the same when I apply a gendered title. It is a perception of a way of being but it is not a Self unless there might be certain aspects of a Self that are definitive in a teacher, any teacher and thus compose teacher selves.

This, the entrance into the room of a Self, is a physical entry, a porting of my Self into the presence of Others. My Self is not truly a representation of my Self, at this stage, as it is my role as a teacher that has allowed me to be present in a school. It is irrelevant as to the state of my Self, and yet there could be aspects of my Self that could be encapsulated in the teacher and these might be character and virtues. Thus teacher is present, abstracted from Self yet, it forms a large aspect of presence.

Can I have intentionality towards me? If I have intentionality, it is about something or towards something. So if it is I, my Self, who has intentionality, is it possible for this to be internalised and turned towards me, my Self? Does this not then make it so that the thing that is a Self, and that I am trying to consider, is in turn intending to consider itself? Yet should this happen, mere subjectivity might interfere with the rational objectivity that is required to scrutinise an object. Perhaps that intentionality towards me, done by me is a subjective and narrow interpretation—I must intend to do something with my Self.

Should I present such a notion to Van Manen (1990, p. 10) he might suggest that consciousness cannot be the object of its own consciousness and thus we cannot have true introspection. Consciousness is our access to the world. Van Manen goes on to reveal that this consciousness is an awareness of something. I understand this to mean that as we are living the experience of our consciousness, it is not possible to

be reflecting upon this consciousness as we are experiencing it. Later, we might consider ourselves in light of the world at a particular time. Reflection cannot happen in time, in the now but as a retrospective measure—thinking upon something that has happened. Hence I write.

So when I am discussing the different types of Self or the partitions of Self, then one might suppose that I take on a Self-identity. I adopt a particular stance, a particular mode of operating, and, utilizing this Self, I explore other partitions. If I imagine Self as a huge room, full of room dividers, complete with particular images, experiences that I might cast behind a partition, into a small space and here my happy Self casts a positive eye over the room, colouring all with a rosy hue of delight and thus an intention of happiness so I then am intending happiness towards my Self, or the part that has a sadness, despair. Does then each aspect of Self, every partition and tiny space, have a corresponding other/opposite?

Perhaps the best allegory I have is that of the point of singularity from which the universe began. A singularity, an energy, which, when expanded became all matter, an embodiment. Is my Self with my emotions of love and hate, happy and sad—is this then what makes it possible to have intentionality towards Self? Otherwise, Self is too coloured and its Self-intending is too closed to expose an intentionality towards something that it already is.

When I carry this multi-dimensional Self, this singularity, it brings to bear all contrasting manifolds with which I must choose through which Self lens to see with; which Self colour to paint with and which Self voice to speak with. Thus is it choice that allows for Self-intentionality towards itself? A teacher Self is a manifested, political, social and constructed Self—one that answers to the demands of

institutionalised education. Yet Self is not composed of such clear parameters on every aspect of its partitions thus one Self cannot take a singular intended view of a Self as boundaries are hazy and muddled and might allow for overlap of the social and gendered Self or the political and happy Self.

Can any one aspect of Self then actually stand, alone and take a Self view, without any contamination from another partition? I have an intentionality towards my Self and I cast my searching Self, happily and curiously, across teacher Self who has surfaced as I enter a classroom. I choose, rationally, to present a Self, emitting inquisitiveness, interest, joy, sociability and benevolence.

My virtuous Self dominates using codes of temperance, wisdom, justice, and courage—as spoken of by Thomas Aquinas in the book by Richard Regan, *Thomas Aquinas: The Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance* (2005, p. vii) as he discusses virtues as contemplated by Aristotle. He speaks of these four cardinal virtues as the ones of action and thus those of life and living. It is these virtues that I, as an agent of reason, have learned through life whereby life has had a profound effect upon my Self and might have caused change and thought. It is these virtues that lend themselves to my *praxis* as a teacher, a wise teacher as I talk of courage to teach, moral justice, wisdom and careful thought in my work as a teacher.

To appreciate how a teacher might intend towards a classroom, I want to re-examine the notion that it is conceivable to intend towards Self. How am I going to begin contemplating myself in such a way that the life that I reflect upon shouts my purpose in following a female teacher as she begins to analyse her experiences in a heterogeneous classroom? Introspection might induce empathy with others as we consider ourselves in light of an influential Self. However, I can only reflect upon

something that has happened and, if I take my Self-lens, how can I look at it through the same lens?

Journey of Discovery

I am reading and writing my thoughts and wondering how I got to this stage? What stage am I at? Disclosure of thought is aligned with my metaphorical movement through one floor level to another and is chosen to exemplify my narrative on the first floor, my look at a Self who grew to question the methods that are used to provide a “good education” and what happens to girls. This reflexive Self finds herself in a state of learning—narrative learning and my story and the actions which follow cause me to move through another stairwell, a ladder, with rungs, a stairwell with steps which shows the gradual rise in understanding. Slowly enabling and learning, gradually experiences making sense, expanding into action. I sense that this can be articulated as courage and wisdom. My careful construction of a skeleton to self-awakening is enabled as a building of stories and storeys connected through stairwells and lifts—slow as they enable inter-connection and layers as they constantly fabricate a teacher awareness.

A further story is attained where my narrative is about how I experience this level, this surface. I might consider what reflections or learning will lead me further and might unlock another door? I must consider these questions, as it is these that will sanction direction, provide symbolic guideposts.

I find myself climbing stairs, step by step. I am trying to get to the next level in this building because it is on the next level that I will find elements I desire. My Self constantly moves higher, my effort assisted by the inclined plane of the stairs, my

simple machine. I, my Self, is moving in the now—a time that is current for me, in a changing context that is being experienced by me.

As Self moves, so context changes—wall colour is different, different materials cover stairs and handrail is slippery. The Self does not change in appearance. The internal workings of the physiological Self change as respiration becomes more rapid, temperature rises and muscles tire. The Self looks the same upon arriving at the required level. By the physical exertion, that I have experienced as a result of climbing stairs, there have been changes to my inner Self—as I move and change context, my physiological Self has experienced a stress that demands a response.

Welcome, Self! I am now situated on a new floor of the building. I have been told of this floor. I have seen photos of this floor but, now, I am really here and my senses are alive with absorbing every new sensation—visual and auditory, olfactory and kinaesthetic. Now I can instigate a fathoming of this level. Sokolowski (2000, p. 177) refers to this achievement of levels of understanding as *eidetic intuition*, which is an identity synthesis. I wonder how to align this synthesis with my staircase and see that we could understand through finding similarities between events or things. To continually climb stairs, to work through to the next level, means that the actual stairs form the cogitative action of thinking. We continue like this until we have a universal feature that can identify and that an object cannot be without. I then, initially think of a person, me. I want to find Self in me but to do this, I need to gradually understand manifolds of humanity and seek out a distinguishing feature of my humanness, which I do consider to be a consciousness.

Situating my Self in Life Worlds

I knew about teaching because I had read history of education so I knew the dynamics of the theoretical classroom and I knew that boys and girls were different. How did I know these things? I was informed, or read a book, or watched a movie or I experienced it myself. Information was transferred to me and I understood the notions in terms of the experiences and prior knowledge that was a part of me.

As teacher Self, I went into a classroom of adolescent boys and girls in a public high school. I saw each individual person and saw the subtle interactions of face and body, of speech and looks. I heard the whispered and shouted comments. I listened to the abuse and the denigration and the tone with which it was delivered. I watched the facial changes and body slumps. I delivered the planned lesson and received neither applause nor attentiveness. My education books had not conveyed this to me. It had been one-dimensional—flat word on flat page.

My reactions are in the here and now. My reactions occurred as responses to signals of the classroom. My reactions are my own—experiences and knowledge of my Self, my socialised woman Self, my acculturated human Self, and a multi-dimensional Self. The Self of me constructed my deliberations and explanations, alone but not isolated.

The situated Self, within the classroom, attempts to interpret the reality of the classroom but how is this possible when Self is blinded and constructed by society and culture? How is it possible to lift those cultural blinkers? This is where Self seeks interpretations of the situation and thus it is time to understand Self and to validate a situated Self of a female teacher within the classroom.

To develop an understanding of what is happening within the classroom, Self cannot be blinded by conflict and prejudice, by bias and ignorance. The Self must validate and understand multi-layered perceptions of the classroom (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 18).

Self is complex. It is subjective and objective. It is a collection of information received and the “I” of my relationship with a world. It is feminine ‘I’ and a contextualisation of my feminine Self. When I situate myself with a context and become receiver and translator of information, derived from the environment that I am in now, it is not a gender neutral situation nor is it someone else’s interpretation of the feminine “I” in the now.

Thus my female teacher Self is a researcher and, through investigating education, in which I am a protagonist, it will be my narrative that seeks to understand what is happening. I am the embodiment of my investigation and reality. I am a nomad through the worlds of education seeking and finding phenomena.

With the emergence of Self-reflexivity in ethnography, epistemological and ontological questions about subjectivity come more immediately to the fore. In simple terms, we need to ask what exactly a Self-reflexive Self is reflecting upon. In addition, it needs to be clear where that Self is positioned and whether it is a textual or physical entity (Probyn, 1993, p. 62).

My Self is situated in context, geographical location and emotional situation. This is a temporal and spatial Self, an embodied Self that is present (van Manen, 1990, p. 104). Should I be removed from the present time and space then I will remain a Self but contextually there will be a variation in what is seen and done.

When the Self is present, it is present to others. Thus there is awareness of a Self or another Self. I would suggest, at this stage, then that the Self can be present in a dialogical situation (van Manen, 1990, p. 100).

My situated Self is where I sit or stand in my thesis and I want to be able to convey to all about what this place is. Time is wide and spacious. Space is narrower but I will expand it to become a global recognition of space.

My situated Self is present in the stories of girls and their provenances. I am an actual participant in education but I become the storyteller. I receive their narratives and weave them into my thesis where they integrate and build notions of girls, ideas and thoughts of females. I use my wisdom and my components, my partitions and my parts as they all contrive to weave narratives using my cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, wisdom and courage. I look into a classroom where boys push each other and girls sit silently.

If my Self is present, there can be danger that this Self will become a fundamental part of the girls' stories but I reiterate, I am a storyteller, in dialogue. My role as a situated Self is to begin to interpret these stories, to bring their meaning forth in light of the information we have. I must unwrap the layers that comprise their lives and look past the gilding. I adorn my narrative with their tales.

I want to understand education in the 21st century and I need to clarify exactly where I am in these narratives and how my own narrative might be an influential part of this thesis tale. I have one vital component of education that has been alluded to but not presented in her full regalia of adolescence and it is in my next chapter that you will meet the girls who are to become women in the 21st century.

Chapter 7: Drowning in Adolescence

Not Waving But Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,

But still he lay moaning:

I was much further out than you thought

And not waving but drowning

Poor chap, he always loved larking

And now he's dead

It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,

They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always

(Still the dead one lay moaning)

I was much too far out all my life

And not waving but drowning. Stevie Smith

Mary Pipher (1994, p. 22) mentions this poem and proposes that this is the relationship between a girl's true Self and a cultural prescription for what it is to be female.

Stevie Smith writes of a man drowning but his demeanour belied the fact. I capture this for a girl. She is not waving but she is drowning as she gradually converts to conditions of the Big Other but her tentative whimpers persist and are overlooked by those of us who do not fathom her distance from her true Self (Pipher, 1994, p. 23). Media hones in to a vulnerable age, grasping and gripping, deafening

with shrieking images and slogans. She is inundated, engulfed and saturated, still waving her Bacardi Breezer and brazening the cold adolescent fog, swathed in Lady Gaga allure. She descends into a vestige of the Media sea, society—a rational community.

Freedom

From reflections upon education, I allow a plethora of questions to emerge as I present and suggest some social factors that I have come to believe might influence the way girls see themselves. Biesta, Seligman, Pipher and Sokolowski draw my attention to freedom, optimism, resilience and future mindedness—issues of concern to a female teacher of girls.

Some girls fly high. Some girls have dreams. Some girls have hopes. Some girls are amazing. Some girls are achievers. Some girls aren't any of the above. Some girls are positive and optimistic. Some girls cannot see a future of hope. Some girls do not know how to fight against the obstacles of life. Some girls find it hard to become optimistic and satisfied with their lives.

I gained a position at a public high school in Tasmania and mainly dealt with Grade Ten students. Much of this story takes place in the Grade Ten corridors. I could not believe it. Every Monday morning, I was assailed by the gossip regarding the activities of the weekend. There was a total disregard for any female sensitivity by both boys and girls. Girls and their sexual adventures were openly discussed and ridiculed. I looked around me and saw intelligent young women who would do anything for male attention, to the exclusion of their own sense of pride. Detail is not necessary at this point. My senses were offended. Where had the progressive young woman gone? Where were girls with a sense of who they were and where they were

going? This wasn't liberation! I did not and cannot see personal liberty when one individual faces ridicule as a result of their actions. I cannot see that freedom is when one person subjugates their wishes in order to gain another's attention. Degradation and denigration does not spell freedom.

Sokolowski proposes that freedom is when we attempt to determine our future well. It happens when we consider, truthfully, all alternatives and choose that which is best for us (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 27). Using these words as a guide might I consider that girls are not free as their liberty is bound to the approval of others? The courage to choose is often difficult for adolescent girls who are building personal concepts and attempting to be validated by external influences. So when the boys ridicule girls, the freedom of the girls is restricted by the boys' perceptions of their sexuality. The girls will tell me that they are free—free to do what they like, have sex with whom they like, wear what they like and the word “free” is very freely used.

Child of the 21st Century

In my singular context of a classroom, I describe the single objects of the chair, the desk and the room and they are purely artefacts—manifestations of a governmental budget.

The student is more. She is female and she brings a socialised, cognitive entity to the room. Who is she?

I do not believe that she needs a name as with a label come ideas, judgments about her background. Should I call her Chloe or should I call her Le-A (Ledasha)? Does a name confer a personality and an identity? Zizek (in Myers, 2003) suggests that we are born into the Symbolic Order as a chain of meaning accompanies the conferring of a name. Perhaps I might categorise Le-A as the student and thus it

might seem that she does not arise from a “nice” family as “nice” families christen their girls Sophie or Eliza and do not hold with such frivolous names like Le-A. I take the term “nice” and load it with the bullet of middle class, complete with values and goals.

She was born in the 1990’s and is turning fifteen soon. She is a child of the 21st century; a breed that has not visited previously. Her music is diverse, her physical image varies, she hungers awkwardly for unfamiliar things, her inspirations are different and dominant Media conveys a mode of being in her world that confers confusion but socialises her nevertheless.

Do I see images of youth? Do I see children of any generation in this girl? I perceive fleeting glimpses of rebellion, a desire for autonomy and a sense of chaotic, embryonic womanhood. I consider that these traits are universal in the whirling miasma of adolescence and I see her innocent grasp of buoys.

How does she be? How is she being?

She is sitting on a red plastic chair in a room in a school in a regional town.

I do not wish to call her Le-A.

To understand the importance of the predicament of the female adolescent, I consider adolescence for females and issues that might confront the teenager.

Pipher says that sociologists and society view adolescence as a time between the ages of twelve and eighteen, with some movement allowed on each side. At this stage of life, the being undergoes a metamorphosis that may take six years or longer, during which time she or he physically becomes adult and psychologically develops adult ways. The physiological changes involve the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts, body hair, vocal changes, and skeletal and muscular

changes. Fat deposits define the female body and hormonal changes prepare her for menarche (Pipher, 1994, p. 53).

From an androgynous appearance comes a rounder version of a body for the female. These changes can cause confusion, embarrassment, bewilderment and insecurity. What to do with this new body? What does it mean for how others see me? Why does it now matter how others see me?

It is at this stage that the personal identity, that she had previously taken for granted, hits obstacles and the maze of Self development becomes a series of twists, turns, and awakens perceived failures and rejections. Pipher (1994, p. 66) emphasizes the more positive period when there is strong family support. This, however, is not always true even with that strong background, as the awakening Sleeping Beauty, is learning to fit her Self to a new body and in many, there seems to be no match!

With the advent of adolescence, she suddenly sees a body that is at odds with how she previously saw herself. The person who could run, jump, play and wear just anything is now about to be bombarded with the images of socially acceptable appearances and activities that girls do. Pipher points out the gap between the developing body, with its fatty deposits, and the emphasis on thinness. Thin girls look better; they attract boys; they are the envy of all. Without understanding the physiology behind these changes and with the barrage of “thin is best”, as Media messages, the adolescent girl may become a victim of eating disorders or obsessed with her bodily appearance. Those fat thighs and huge backside will become the focus of her life and every reaction to her will be because of those bodily imperfections. To expose, in Physical Education, her perceived abnormalities is impossible for her, like many girls, she seeks retreat to the safety of feigned illness or

injury so to avoid physical activities. She will wear a long T- shirt over shorts, which while being good for decreased sun exposure, is worn while swimming, to hide the body. Only girls who are slim can be seen in bikinis, a mark of their success as females.

I will attempt to convey the experience of adolescence of a girl who sees herself as a typical teenager—Lizzie. I pose questions devised around conversations with girls. These questions are the basis of many of my conversations with girls and are the focal point of the girls' observations and reactions to situations. When the girls speak amongst themselves and with me, there are certain topics often repeated and these seem to be the pivotal points of their lives at that time. Primarily the topics are about themselves, their bodies, their friends and their family relationships. Attempts to connect to each other seem to be driven by common ground and their place within the family, the parental support and their place in their immediate world.

I will also note here that the real name of any person is not used, in order to create anonymity. It is an ethical approach to protect all subjects who have cooperated with my research.

Lizzie is a mixture of girls and their thoughts.

She is composed of a particular range of personalities that I encounter as a teacher of upper middle school students. I speak to many of the girls and also manage to gather a range of personal impressions from their behaviours around school, with each other and with other adults and this assists in understanding my character, Lizzie.

It is a reality that adolescence is difficult. The transition into being a young woman contains many obstacles and traps. As the girl begins to change, so do some

of her thoughts and her actions. These changes are manifested in a variety of ways such as the new obsession with body and image. The thoughts have been there but dormant. This age is where the travails begin!

Lizzie's thoughts and words are fairly typical of her age group and it is not always easy trying to retrieve information from the girls, as they are somewhat hesitant about giving too much away. I try to demonstrate a "typical" Lizzie.

Lizzie is an attractive girl. She stands approximately 170cm tall and has an average body type. She has long brown hair and a wonderful smile. As with most young girls, she has that flawlessness and softness of skin without the worries of the world etched.

Lizzie is quite intelligent. She was a top student at Primary School but her arrival into Secondary School was not the triumphant event she had fantasised about and she found that it was better not to be too clever. She has a logical mind, combined with a love of words and likes to address a range of issues. Usually she is courteous to adults as her mother insists on that.

Sport used to be a major feature of Lizzie's life. She swam, ran, jumped and played. She could kick a ball better than the others and loved to score in soccer and hockey. She actively enjoyed physical activity. Middle School brought a halt to that and Lizzie doesn't always involve herself in sport. If she does, she wears long track pants and a loose T-Shirt.

Lizzie has a wide range of friends because she likes to talk and she is gregarious. Her friends like being around her because she laughs a lot and makes them feel good. That is a real talent of hers.

She sees herself as rather typical of teenagers. She has a mobile phone, reads Dolly magazine, has MySpace and FaceBook, likes commercial type music and loves clothes. She wants to be popular as do all her friends and will do what it takes. She wears makeup and worries about her body.

I use interview as a technique, intentionally, as a way to gather information about an adolescent girl as a means of developing a richer understanding of Lizzie's personal story (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). It is through this rich understanding that I seek to build your understanding of what it means to be a girl on the cusp of womanhood. Let's go then and meet Lizzie.

Hello Lizzie. I want to find out about you and what it is like to be a teenager now. Would you just like to introduce yourself before we start?

I am a 13-year-old girl. I do what most other kids of my age do. I go to school and hang out with my friends. I read magazines and watch Home and Away. What else is there? I don't mind school. In our year, some of the girls are really bitchy and when they do it really well they do it really well. The boys in my year group are pretty stupid. They like to do things like push each other round, and in class, they are such pains. They think it is really funny to make loud noises and say rude things especially to the teachers.

I guess I play sport but I don't like to swim much.

Can you just tell me a bit about home? Your Mum? What does she do? Your Dad?

Nothing much. Dad lives with his girlfriend. He left a while ago and I see him sometimes. I don't like going to stay though as she makes me sleep on the couch because she says there isn't really room for me. That's ok and I look after my two stepsisters when they go out. That's ok. Dad doesn't talk much to me but he is ok.

Mum is always worrying about me. She works and doesn't get home til about 5 most days. Sometimes she is later. She is pretty cool for a Mum and she wears nice clothes and likes to talk to me but I don't always want to talk to her and then she gets shitty. I mean

she's your Mum and you don't want to talk about everything with her. She is pretty strict I suppose. She doesn't let me go out like some of the girls do. She always has to know where I am and that is not fair cos other mothers don't do that. When she's late from work, I can hang out for longer with my friends and we just do stuff like get on the computer or watch TV or DVDs. She doesn't like some of the things we watch so I don't always tell her cos she will just go mad.

I have a little brother too and he is always hanging around. Sometimes he tells Mum things I don't want her to know. He's 10 and goes to Primary School.

Thanks Lizzie. I want to ask you, firstly, what's it like being a teenager? Then we can have a few more specific questions. Your ideas first though.

I don't know. Like, I don't know if it is really different but everyone treats you differently.

How do you mean?

Well, like I guess I have grown up a lot. I am taller now and my, well, you know, breasts are bigger and so are some of the other girls'. Everyone wears makeup now and I do too but not too much cos Mum would get mad. People keep telling me that I should look to the future and plan for the future and think about what I am going to do when I leave school. Well I have ideas but there is enough to think about now. I mean, like, I don't know.

What sort of things, Lizzie?

Well, at school, it is really important that people like you. When you look around you see who is popular and what they do and how they look. I want to be popular but I am too fat. I really try and sometimes everyone wants to be my friend then they find others. I don't know but it's hard. You have to wear the right clothes and look pretty. I know I am smart but that doesn't help me. So what I do is just do some stuff and not too much. If I am smart, people make fun of me. The boys do that. It is easier to just pretend that you aren't that smart then all you have to do is try to be pretty cos that seems to be more important.

Lizzie and Her Self

Lizzie easily discusses her Self through using a series of interactions and events. She talks in detail of who she is but always in relation to another person. She is a main character and she cannot stand-alone. Sokolowski (2008, p. 45) presents the idea that the I, the Self, is that around which the world revolves. Within this Self's world, all is viewed and replayed from Self. The Self of Lizzie holds her beliefs and her view of the world. She sees it, looking out. From her language it is possible to believe that Lizzie does not think deeply about the conditions around her. She is in the natural attitude and, as such, is not reflecting on her world and how she is within it. Sokolowski suggests that it is not until we are older that we begin to introduce notions of illusion—we come to know that things are not as they always seem.

Interview Continues

Lizzie, can we just go back a bit where you were talking about swimming and things you do in PE?

Yeah, ok. Like, does it matter?

Why don't you swim?

Well, I can swim... you know like a bit but hate getting into my bathers. I want to wear a bikini but you know, I feel pretty stupid in one. The other kinds of things we do are ok. In PE we play basketball and stuff, and that's cool. The boys like to take the ball though and they never pass it. I suppose they always do that. If we play soccer, they don't kick the ball to the girls. Lots of the girls sit out during PE. They say they have their periods or that mum said they are sick or something like that. That's fake. I think it is because the boys laugh at them and so do some of the girls. It's not funny if you can't do stuff really well, like running and things. I am no good at running. I feel that I look really stupid when I run and I know the others are thinking the same so I sometimes sit out too.

Why do you think the girls pretend they have a period?

Don't know but I guess it is so they don't look like idiots and so others won't laugh at them. This way they have an excuse not to look stupid.

Girls and How They Look

Thus begins the story of appearances and acceptance. Pipher, in her book *Reviving Ophelia* (1994, p. 183), talks at length about the influence on appearance and society's enormous focus on it. Girls learn early that it is how you look, how your body is that gets you noticed and valued. How difficult it is to find that you inhabit a body that is in contrast to your beautiful Self! How confusing it is to discover that no breasts mean that you are valueless as a woman. How much emphasis do we really place on acceptance by the boys?

Interview continues

What do you do in school?

I am ok. I muck around a bit and sometimes get into trouble. Really, I sometimes make smart comments to teachers because then everyone thinks I am cool. I like being cool. I don't really mean what I say. It just happens. Most of the girls just sit and they usually pretend to do what they have to do. The boys are noisy. They make it hard for us to listen and when we want to talk about things they make fun of us. That's just because they can't and they are so immature. I like to talk about stuff but it makes it hard when the boys laugh or they start talking about sex and sometimes they make fun of the girls.

What do they do?

They sit there and then say something about someone's boobs or they make other kinds of suggestions. That is awful. When they do this you just shut up and get on with your own stuff. One day Daniel said that I had big boobs only because I was fat. That was so bad. Why did he do that? I wasn't doing anything or saying anything to him. I just said something

about what we were talking about in class. I couldn't say anything else. What if he kept on saying things about me out loud? Everyone would think I was a real loser then. I felt shame. This hasn't just happened once. It happens often to me and to the others. We all hate it but what can we do? The teacher doesn't do anything about it and I don't feel that I can say anything. I wanted to tell him that he was stupid but the rest of the boys were laughing too so I knew things would just be worse.

Power Shift

This particular kind of incident will be discussed in greater detail further on in Chapter 10, *The Play*. It is here that I have seen girls at their most vulnerable and totally disempowered by male words. As a person, Lizzie has a very shaky view of herself and, as this is a forming time, it takes little to throw a young woman off her path. By announcing to the whole world that Lizzie was fat, immediately placed her in the realm of “loser”, a term associated with the socially undesirable. Being fat is one of the most offensive terms that can be applied to women and girls. In a society that worships slim and thin to the point of emaciation, anything larger or different is unacceptable. It becomes the Other in a classroom. Not only are there gender differences, it is, by these few words, possible to create another space within the girls' world by dividing them into physically attractive and otherwise—the unbeautiful. Is it possible to really tell my audience what this does to a young girl? A lesson is learnt—if you speak out, then you might just set yourself up as a target and the only outcome for that is shame. This is a message sometimes given to vulnerable young women when in a position of transition and a Self is being defined. Admittedly it is an evolving Self, but it is a Self that is to be promoted into this world. If, one person defines your Self as a loser, then perhaps it is because they have the power to do this. This is how a bully works. Sexual harassment in bullying

is a common way for one person to achieve power. Nan Stein, in her book *Bullying as Sexual Harassment in Elementary School*, says that this is how bullying works as it denies girls their rightful entitlement to be safe and to be freely educated in a classroom (Stein, 2002, p. 410).

Myra and David Sadker, in *The Miseducation of Boys*, show that boys find ways of removing themselves from girls (2002, p. 199). From their earliest days at school, boys learn a destructive form of division about how to separate themselves from girls. Boys learn in the classroom, that they can demean girls at will. Schools that do not permit racist, ethnic or religious slights, still tolerate sexism as a harmless bigotry.

Lizzie, do you think about looks? You know what I mean?

I know I don't look like the girls in the photos. I am not skinny. I have tried. My mum put me on a diet where I ate a boiled egg at breakfast, and then a salad at lunch then could have some meat and vegies at teatime. I lost weight. Everyone said I was gorgeous then. But I was so hungry. I used to try and sneak food but that didn't help. I stayed slim for a while then I am here where I am now. But I can't wear a bikini or some of those short dresses. My bum looks big and my thighs are huge. I look silly. I want to look pretty. People don't make fun of you then. If I was thinner, it would be better and people wouldn't laugh. When I look in the magazines that is all I see. Pretty girls, wearing nice clothes and people around them and they are laughing and having a good time. And they are pretty.

Tell me more about the magazines.... what else do you see?

Well, they have long hair and they have sexy eyes and lips. My lips look too thin. I want them bigger so I can get that cool look. I try the makeup but it feels awful on my skin and sometimes it looks like I have just painted my face. All the girls wear makeup and eye stuff. Some of them look so like they have really loaded it on and that just looks dumb at school.

Most of us wear it though cos it makes us look better.

Then the clothes... I said before I wish I could wear the little things they wear. Then you look at the underwear. My mum said she would get me some new stuff and I wanted those little tiny thong things. You know – some people call them bum floss!!!! Everyone wears them and you can get such pretty ones. She said no. She said that little girls of my age didn't need to wear those things. I told her that I m not a little girl. She laughed. I didn't. It's not fair. Everyone will know that I have to wear these horrible big knickers... I have seen pictures of girls younger than me wearing them. I wish I could.

Being Beautiful

The makeup industry thrives on the perpetuation of the notion of perfection. There is a notion, one of absence, that should a girl not have makeup, should it be absent, she will be imperfect. So absence of cosmetics might confirm inadequacy on a girl. Wolf (1990, p. 278) suggests that when sexuality and identity are fully confirmed, then cosmetics will be fun and only an enhancement. For young girls, who neither have confirmation of their identity nor of their sexuality, absence means she is unbeautiful. Again, the topic of beauty is to be discussed in detail further on.

Interview continues

What difference would it make with the thongs and clothes?

It makes you prettier and people like you. I have said that before. Boys think you are sexy if you have blonde hair and wear short skirts and, you know, like really low tops. When you put makeup on, you should look like the girls in the photos. But it really is all about looking sexy I guess. My mum doesn't want me to be like that. She says that everyone gets the wrong idea.

What does she think will happen?

I don't know. Maybe she thinks I'll get raped or something. Or she might think I'll have too many boys hanging around cos they think I am cool. I don't know. She always tells me stories about when she was young and girls, who looked like they do in photos, were fair game. You know, the boys hung with them a lot. Anyway, I guess she is worried that I'll have sex or someone will have sex with me. I know others who do it.

Is that what you want?

I don't know. Like, I want a boyfriend and I suppose that is part of it. It's a bit scary really.

So, the girls get dressed up so they can get a boyfriend?

Yeah I guess so. But it is also because the other girls will make fun of her if she doesn't. Those girls who have boyfriends are popular and they are doing it. I mean, I want to look pretty and so on but I don't know about sex. I just want to be happy!

Sexuality

Sexuality rears its head. As human beings, sexuality is a part of who we are. Structurally we have clear definitions in the presence of genitalia, and physiologically in the hormones we manufacture to develop our sexual Self. Thus, as a young woman begins her journey, she is to think about her sexual Self. What images are shown to her? What does she hear? Why does she have to be sexy? Is sexy a "thong"? Might there not be a level of confusion here at to what constitutes sexuality. Is it the Media imagery of partially clad or naked young girls, dancing around fully clad fat men? Is this what girls have to be?

Interview continues

So Lizzie, do you think that that is what would make you happy? Being popular?

Well, no one wants to be a loser and when people look at you they see that you are ok if

you look good. I mean if you are pretty then you are happy. Those people always have friends and boys around them and they can have any sort of clothes and, well, people just like them. I don't know. I want to be good at my writing and I do like to think and sometimes, when I talk with Ms. Heerely, she makes me want to really use my mind and be someone. I do try to think of that but when someone laughs at you then you try to be good in other ways. I don't know. Like, I, well, I don't want to be a loser.

Let's change the subject a bit. What do you do well in Lizzie?

I don't know. Maybe I like writing and English and stuff. Yeah, I like that because I can get to talk and think about things. I like Science too but we don't often get the chance to do lots of talking and thinking. We have learning to do! I don't like Maths at all. It is boring and I can't see the point in all the stuff. My teacher says that girls need to do well in Maths and Science, as that is where the jobs are. I don't know, like, how can that mean anything to me? I just am good at writing and not Maths. But I do Maths and I do ok but I don't like it. When I leave school, I want to be an archaeologist or a nurse or a teacher. Or something like that.

You know, when we do English, we get to read and we do Creative Writing too and that is fun. I think my brain works better with words than numbers!!

Aspirations

How is it possible to critique a young girl's aspirations? Do I write about how she should aim higher and not be looking at "nurturing" professions? What is wrong with nurturing professions? It would seem that girls do read and write better than boys, on the whole. Various research has indicated that this is because girls enjoy using words, reading and less physical activities so are happy to devote time to reading but there is other conflicting research that suggests that this is a nurture thing and it is the influence of a family and the immediate environment that supports her literacy.

Interview continues

Lizzie, what do you do out of school?

Hang out with my friends, go and stay with my friends. Sometimes we go down town shopping. I like shopping because we all are looking at the nice clothes and wondering what will look best. Some of my friends are skinny and they get lots more choice of things. I wish I was too. I like my friends. Sometimes we have fights but usually we get back together. One time though, Kaylee went off with this guy who Kate wanted. That was bad. There was a huge fight. And then he went off with another girl. That wasn't funny and Kaylee cried so much and so did Kate and then they made friends again. But they did send her some text messages. They weren't good and someone found out and they got into lots of trouble for it.

I always have my phone with me. My friends and me text each other all the time. I hate the thought of not having it with me. I have this really cool little phone. It's pink and Mum gave it to me for my birthday. I can take pictures and everything.

I like my computer. I get onto FaceBook and MySpace a lot. I like to talk with my friends on that. One time this girl put all this stuff out there, and told her life story to someone she thought was a friend and then this friend went and told everyone. She had said stuff about what she did with boys. When she went to school on Monday she was crying and things. The teacher gave us a talk on how to use the Internet... but I bet she doesn't use MySpace.

I want to dance. My mum told me I was too heavy to dance. But I really want to but how do you do something if others will laugh at you because you are fat? I wanted to do ballet but when others found out they just teased me about being so fat and how funny it would be to see an elephant on the stage. That hurt and I don't think about dancing now. But I like music and I want to look like those girls do.

Which girls are those?

You know the ones in the videos. They always look cute and they have lots of boys around them. They wear such cool clothes and they are so beautiful and thin. And they all dance real well. I tried those moves but only at home by myself. I looked in the mirror and

that was bad! I still do that sometimes though. When I am with my friends and we have music on, it takes a while then someone will dance. I don't like to though so I just sing a lot.... then I don't look like I can't dance.

Do you know, Lizzie, that there will be an all-girls Class next year? Would you like to be in it?

Is there? Someone said something about it but I wasn't really listening. I don't know, like what would we do? No, I think it could be ok. When we have the boys around, the girls often do things just so the boys will see them and whistle and make comments. Then the boys are so stupid in class time. But won't the girls just be really bitchy?

The idea of an all-girls class is that girls will get to do things in a way that suits them and in ways that help everyone in the class. You will also get to talk about things that are important and to look at ways that you can do even better. What do you think?

Would that really work? I mean, I like the idea of doing things how we like and having our own class and not having to put up with those dumb boys. But it is not going to get me to dance is it? That doesn't matter really. Yeah, it could be good. Who else is going in to it?

In Lizzie's responses, I see a recurring pattern of insecurity about Self and body. I see a girl who seems to have lost her path. Her lack of confidence leads to misinterpretations of people's reactions and her constant allusion to her body collaborates with unreal expectations of what constitutes attractiveness. It is also at this level that we see an over-emphasis on being pretty and physically desirable—can I say that in respect to a 13 year old girl?

A Female Teacher's Lens upon Girls

Our Lizzie is not a stand-alone case. As I stated at the beginning, she displays a composite of many 13-14 year old girls. Her thoughts represent many thoughts and feelings typical of this age group.

Thus emerges the struggle. Outside is this imperfect body, sometimes acne has invaded the face and the hair is dull. Then who is she? Who is the Self, lurking deep inside the body? Anger at not being able to work with the body, resentment that they are different to another, hurt as rejection slices into their psyche, wonderment at what path should be taken—all are part of the female adolescent.

Pipher (1994, p. 232) alludes to the idea that the girls of the 60's actually had it easier than do the girls of today. The stresses that feast on the girls' confusion are manifested in so many ways—moodiness, parental rejection, anxiety, depression, reduced resilience, drug taking and sexual activity are some. Media does little to alleviate the situation where popularity and happiness are measured through cosmetic allure, physical precociousness, male attention and fashion excess.

Questions relating to the validity of Self receive obscure answers, subliminally Mediated by editors of photographers' advertisements showing half naked women and fully clothed men. Do men always have the authoritative voice? Women are seen as appendages of the male ego. How do girls receive such messages into the unconscious selves? How do they wrest from them ideas, views and beliefs about what can make a girl successful—amongst her peers, in her family, at her school and later, after school? If this is the case then what does that mean for the girls and their view of what it takes to be successful?

The issues become obvious. A teenaged girl, as she seeks to ratify her Self, must absorb and rationalize her sexuality, her personal power, her body, her confidence, her intellect, resilience and optimism. Her previously held beliefs are dismantled and reassembled so that she can move into adulthood. The dismantling process can be traumatic and the reassembling might be chaotic. The teacher person can open and

hold a place for a girl to understand this frighteningly transforming process and with compassion gently support through her transition into womanhood. As an intelligent teacher, I am to mediate between Media and building girls' resilience against negative popular culture. I transcend the notion of giving her tools and instead, in my questioning, I seek wisdom and share what I find with her as she journeys towards becoming a woman. I will not be part of mandating a future for her. Žižek says that there are no mandated gender roles (in Myers, 2003, p. 91). There is sexual difference but gender, as a signifying word, has been hauled into the Symbolic Order where an attempt is made to expose sexual difference using a signifying chain of appearance, disposition, jobs, sports, and a range of other things—all representing a gender divide.

To exist as a social human in an education setting, I might suppose that a gender divide might become a daily performance. Žižek speaks of a symbolic fiction (in Sheehan, 2012, p. 118). I speak of the same symbolic fiction and apply it to gender. Within the fiction of woman and man, obscuring sexual difference, lies a divide. With the divide, I find that it becomes a performance divide with players each side of the line assuming a required stance in regards to gender. The Symbolic Order, with its patriarchal language, ensures that all games are played out. Education as an institutionalised function of the Symbolic Order contains its protagonists both architecturally and legally. Upon this stage of education, I set my play.

Chapter 8: A Mimetic Gesture

Why drama? Drama is performed on a stage. It is scripted and there are specific directions to be followed. A dramatic play has characters and it happens on a stage. I have seen a play so I understand what a play is. I wonder how many others believe this to be so.

Drama is more than what I have just said. Drama is an ancient way of performing about and commenting on life and life's events. It is used to recreate events and to present these events to an audience. It is about human lived experiences and humans making sense of these experiences. Simon Shephard and Mick Wallis, in their book *Drama/Theatre/Performance*, tell me that drama has been used to make sense of how societies behave, what human beings do and how our lived experiences might come to be understood (2004, p. 1). I am using drama in this way. I bring forward questions regarding what it is to be a female teacher in the Symbolic Order and my thesis is structured around coming to understand what this might look like and what it might mean. Drama, as a technique, allows me to explore a life world of education and the social and educational conventions that form parts of our lives. Through performance of drama, I perform for an audience. I have an audience with you, my reader, so my drama becomes a presentation for you. It is presentation with a purpose in that I am exploring meaning but I am also inviting you into this dramatic space so that you, too, might form your own notions of life within an education world.

I have an audience. My audience will watch and hear my play. Shephard and Wallis speak of an audience when they make reference to it as a group that brings with it attitudes, preconceptions, knowledge which establishes a cognitive framework within which they can ‘read’ the performance (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 238).

With my audience having their own cognition of the dramatic unfolding as a result of their present understandings, I suggest that I am about to offer you a time to make deep considerations around my characters within an educational life world. The secret power of the dramatist is that, even though I am recreating a scene exactly as it happened, I am able to show you the scenes that are necessary and poignant in my understanding of the experiences. I am inviting an intelligent use of your mind so you might come to understand your own beliefs. I could hearken back to Jacques Rancière and his tale of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* where the schoolmaster invites his students to make use of their current knowledge and to open minds so that they might see ways to explore these new things that are being placed before them (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, pp. 1-25). I invite my audience to participate with a similar approach.

Drama is powerful. I use its power to announce questioning of norms in a safe space of a stage. Judith Butler, whose work on rhetoric and feminism is spoken of by Shephard and Wallis (2004, p. 222), considers drama performativity to be a means of understanding gender as a constantly reiterated performance in everyday life. Through this constancy, she suggests, socialisation happens. I place a gender issue within the frame of a drama and it becomes possible to take the role of an observer as the drama unfolds.

Obviously there is a potential problem with the recreation of a life world in that I might select characters to portray a false notion of the real person. I might select dialogue, where language becomes a persuasive mechanism and is thus being used to pervert the event as it actually happened. Trust in the playwright is important and I assure you of my honesty in this moral recreation of an educational world.

Shephard and Wallis speak of the importance of drama as a space where concealed social phenomena might be observed (2004, p. 223). Education, as an institution of society, conceals many phenomena. Zizek's Symbolic Order might be questioned and investigated as language symbols and conventions, commonly used, might be viewed upon the stage. The temporal value of drama suggests that these language conventions, placed within a space of a stage, allow for a cessation of time in everyday life and a chance to observe what is transpiring. The present is thus interrupted as the drama unfolds within its own time and its own space. In education, there is no time to freeze frames of life worlds. To take these scenes of life worlds and place them upon a stage might allow pause for consideration of possibilities for change (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 223).

The mimetic or imitative power of drama must be retained so that its true value of depiction of scenes means that it becomes a way to understand reality. Again, it is imperative that I present my drama with moral integrity and through using mimetic action, a replica of reality—I offer that opportunity (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 213).

What techniques do I use? In appearance, my drama might seem to be simplistic as it is using a script of an educational experience. Let me assure you that it is not simplistic. I ask you to think back on my writing to this point. I have portrayed a reality of education and life worlds within it. I am finally coming to understand the

complex notion of the Symbolic Order and its powerful impact upon a subject. I have divulged personal stories and shared thoughts with you. It is time now to examine an educational reality upon a stage.

I ask you to note that there are two terms I intend to use to describe character and setting. Sokolowski explains the term *dramatis personae* as being the characters in a drama. The origin of the word is such that *personae* unfold to mean a mask, a disguise. I use this term as all players upon my stage are masked in the Symbolic Order with gender as signifier (Sokolowski, 2008, p. 8). The *Dramatis Personae* is also uncovered as when the mask assumed by the character reveals a complete surrender to the real person for which they are a substitute (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, pp. 179-180).

The second term refers to the profound signification of props and objects upon a stage. Nothing is random. Placement is vital and there might even be one object that conveys many layers of meaning but it stands as one object. This is a *mis en scene*. It is contrived to convey, and contrived to portray. My *mis en scene* is the physical arrangement, which articulates and sets the frame of activity (Oxford Online Dictionary). My object is a red chair and its placement upon the stage is highly important as I consider the *mis en scene*, the set design of the play.

To begin my dramatic section, I invite my audience into a theatre to view a stage as a representation of an education life world, which is populated by a myriad of individuals. My characters bring their stories to an institution where the protagonists act and perform within an environment of a school.

I have selected to focus upon gender in my play script. As playwright, it is incumbent upon me to re-create this life world as a copy of what is experienced in a

school. *Mimesis*, as a way of dealing with reality, provides a means where we might learn about the characters (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 213). I intend to use the precision of copy to explore the relationships my characters have with each other at specific times within the action of the play. Through doing this, I suggest an opportunity of reflection as characters are provided with a chance to reflect upon the happenings within a scene. By tendering this reflection time, I also offer my audience a chance to consider the scene from different angles and through seeing the manifolds of the scene—a more profound awareness might reveal things that were previously hidden from eyes and “I”.

I consider the meaning of classroom climate, the atmosphere in which scenes are performed. There are players within the scenes and each scene is crafted using those players, a course of action (drama) and a closing. There are five scenes, each of which will transport the reader to a new level of understanding through the use of a phenomenological technique of reflection upon action and dialogue that occurs during each scene. As I reflect, I ask questions to clarify my own reflections and to evolve key understandings of the multi-layered events that happen. An interesting phenomenon that occurs with each of these reflections is that my evolutionary comprehending of education continually opens up new layers. Things are not as they present themselves but I seek out the manifolds that constitute what I see and hear. I use my recollections to depict scenes of the classroom life world. I will author words, which will bring my reader freedom to interpret and evaluate the text (Barone, 2000) as a crafted literary piece, designed to evoke empathy and understanding of in a classroom. Within that freedom, I pay respect to Other, as I offer the chance to assume your own understandings of my play (Sheehan, 2012, p. 14), without me taking on the role of explicateur.

Mis en Scène

I present a set design that is a replica of a traditional classroom. The classroom has modular desks that can be fitted together for group work or for individual work. The chairs are regulation red plastic, giving little comfort after long periods of time. It is important that my audience takes note of the presence of red plastic chairs, as this is a special technique. On some days there are pictures, artwork and student work on the walls and on other days there is none. A heat pump provides climate control.

My voice has become clinical and distant as I shift thoughts into an education structure as I look dispassionately of what the physical environment of this play is.

Through my previous description of the notion of a *mis en scène*, and through my explanation of the change in my voice, I convey a picture lacking emotion and passion. It is just another classroom.

Demographic representation of the inhabitants of this classroom shows that there are both genders present in the class of twenty-five students. Some students are highly literate while others are less so and some are only functionally literate. At the time this play takes place, there are no disabled students in the class. School testing has determined that there are two boys who have been placed on the “autism spectrum”. There are no support teachers.

Within my traditional classroom are players—the teacher, boys and girls of differing characters and a Hidden Curriculum. These players and the setting and the interactions of experience help to construct a climate—the atmosphere within the traditional classroom and its own unique curriculum. It is the game and the players that distribute a human essence into my play.

As I prepare my reader for the scenes, I shake off the bold forceful shadow of educational structure and instead find myself face-to-face with the players who are my characters. I use silence and Dry Ice. White Noise Curriculum is atmospheric. Vapour surrounds the players.

Dramatis Personae

There is no thesis without my data. There is no drama without my actors. There is no drama thesis without my actors. I bring to you my players, my characters—those who perform in this day-to-day performance of lived experience.

To you, I introduce them—a female teacher, Leia, Emily, Cool Dude#1, Cool Dude #2, Boy Band and Silent Girls in class. There are many who play out the scenes in my world of education but with my focus on education of the 21st century then I must bring you to that world.

The Teacher

She is around 48 years old, she has not always been an educator and she holds a Bachelor of Education from a Queensland University. She is blonde and of solid build. She has two of her own children but is now divorced.

Leia

This girl wants to sing and dance. She wants to be noticed and appreciated but her methods are not loud. Leia is quiet but she is a thinker and wishes to achieve. So what holds her back? She usually shows others respect and is often mindful of others' needs. Leia lives with her father and is under a very strict regime whereby she receives a measure of corporal punishment for perceived wrongdoings. She wants to please and does that to the extent that she compromises herself.

Leia loves singing and dancing but the attention associated with putting herSelf on the line is too hard for her to contemplate.

Emily

Emily is so quiet—never a sound! Conversation is met with a smile but eyes are averted so there can be no obvious contact. “How are you, Emily?” is usually met with eyes directed down and chin on chest and a very quiet, “Good”. This is whispered at such a level that to understand it, one needs to place their ear very close to the mouth of Emily! Confidence? None! Self-belief? None? General conversation? None.

This challenges the teacher indeed. This little girl is so quiet and withdrawn but she does make conversation with her very close friend. The friend is virtually her translator. Contact with others is very limited and it is only through the encouragement of her friend that she ever has any kind of interaction with the other girls. She remains an entity unto herself. The teacher has learned that her mother has English as a second language. She realises that this would have some impact on Emily. This attractive slender girl has very low literacy and numeracy skills. Like others, she passes undetected through the system.

Cool Dude#1

Cool Dude #1 shines. He is a beacon amongst the other boys and he likes it that way. It is his dream to be a bit like one of those men who have everything, and everyone runs around their feet like busy little ants, waiting for the words he will speak so that they might know their direction. He is not what one might call, a scholar. In fact he has very little interest in school and what he is supposed to be doing. He does want a job though and this is important to him but he thinks there might be other ways that you can make easy money and quickly. He isn't really sure

but he has seen those people around and he knows it is possible. And the girls! Yes, he knows that he will have girls everywhere. All he has to do here is keep on with what he is doing and he knows that no one is game enough to take him on at his games. He knows what his games do. He knows that there is no way that the school will throw him out because schools don't do that anymore and he also knows that the teacher will buckle under. Yes, sir, this is a pretty powerful way to be for a young boy. And he is a footballer too!

Cool Dude#2

This boy needs Cool Dude #1. He is like his compass. Cool Dude #1 needs him too as he is the support act. He is the encourager and the underground stirrer. He keeps the mutters going and his reward is the glow falling onto his shoulders from Cool Dude #1. This boy is actually quite smart. He also knows that he can go places as he is the product of a reasonably well-off family who understand what education can do. His parents are besotted and support all that he does. Mind you, he likes it that Cool Dude #1 takes most of the glow because, in reality, not everyone is totally aware that this one is stirring the pot and making sure that all the ingredients are there. If they aren't he knows that he can encourage one of the Boy Band into the mix. This leaves him innocently watching. Occasionally he takes a plunge if the damage by Cool Dude#1 has been rather good on that day and knows he can take a few more risks. He also knows the score. He watches his father in action—professional, sportsman, lawyer, what we would call “successful”. The spotlight does not glow on his mother except when she shines at social events or looks particularly lovely. He knows how the whole thing works.

Boy Band

The Boy Band is their main audience as these are the ones who are impressed. These are the ones who stroke the egos. Without the band, life for the Cool Dudes might not be quite so easy but, really, there is always someone else who will step into their shoes. It is interesting to consider that with this Boy Band, not one of them could stand-alone. It is the strength of the group that gives them their power and it is indeed power. They have each other for support and nothing can stop the action when it gets going. They are not necessarily bad people, they just want to be part of the show and they want some of the glory to rub off on them as it does. Their supporting role demands that they be willing to laugh at all jokes, mutter inanities, pass sexual comments about the girls and comment on their bodies. It is also imperative that if Cool Dude #1 gives an instruction then it is followed and they must all stand as united we stand!

Silent girls

These are the girls of the class. For several of them, the teacher takes weeks to learn their names because they never draw attention to themselves. If anything they actively avoid it. Should they be late for class then it is a quick sidle in the door and hope that one of the Boy Band does not see them. Individually, they are normal attractive young women, all varying in body shape and size and having a range of intellect. There is one who really is a top student and she has learnt to keep herself to herself. At one stage she is the recipient of ridicule and decides that she would do things her way. Some of the girls try to laugh off the comments and call the boys' bluff but the persistent manner of the ridicule diminishes their power so they usually fade out.

Act One

Scene One

Setting

A classroom in a public high school in Tasmania, which is rather non-descript and contains furniture of laminate tables and red plastic chairs. There are windows, overlooking the basketball courts. The layout of the room is conventional in that the tables are in rows and the chairs are placed directly behind them. There is a Public Address speaker high up on the wall at the front of the room above the whiteboard. The room seems to speak of impermanence, as there are no personal items of any kind here.

Characters

Teacher: 48 years old, appears harassed but determined. She is blonde and of solid build.

Cool Dude#1: Footballer and popular with certain groups in the school; confident and arrogant; sporty physical type with dark hair and hints of hair across the cheeks.

Cool Dude #2: Support act for Cool Dude#1. He also is a footballer and has an air of arrogance about him; sporty physical type with the beginnings of hair across his face; fluctuating voice.

Leia: Quiet but keen to achieve; not gregarious but happy to be alone if that is what she feels like; long dark hair drawn back off her face.

Emily: Very quiet and shy; long hair drapes across her face, hiding what she can so she doesn't have to speak to others.

Boy Band: Group of around five boys of varying types but rather ordinary; most play football and are on the same team as the Cool Dudes; lacking the individual confidence of the others but physically similar.

Silent girls: All have long hair but are of varying types; tend to keep their heads down and it is hard to notice them when they rarely draw any attention to themselves in any way.

And the play begins.

Most of the girls have already entered the classroom and are seated on their red, plastic chairs, talking amongst themselves. A smile flirts with a mouth then eyes cast down to the floor, as secrecy steals across a face. A cheerful, confident girl, headphones slung across a

shoulder, chats casually with her teacher. Three boys dawdle in, jeans slung low on backsides and shirts hanging out, covering white T-shirts; their casual, arrogant demeanor loudly declares their attitude to the class. Other boys walk in, jeans baggily attached to hips and clean shirts draped over bony shoulders, carting books in their hands; they seat themselves either alone or with friends. The casual “Cool Dudes” are the ones who look around the room, catching sideways glances from the less brave; hints of a moustache lurk upon one top lip, and scratched partially masculine voices assert their presence. Widely, they sit in their commandeered seats, knees apart and legs splayed, shouting their ownership of this space. Lanky arms are grappling and shoving as they display their strength to a reluctant, yet oddly anticipatory, audience. Finally all are seated.

The teacher begins. An easy path in to the lesson is to find common ground and areas of interest—something that might encourage whole room involvement. One of the girls raises her hand.

Cool Dude #1 calls out “Woohoo”.

His Boy Band eager to be distracted, nudge each other and snigger loudly.

As the girl, Leia, raises her hand, she glances at the clump of sniggers but proceeds to ask the question anyway. She hears what has been said and knows what it is designed to do. She knows that they want to make her look silly but she also thinks that there are other things being said and she brushes a hand over her skirt, making sure that it is not lifted up. She appears to be aware of the undercurrent of some comments that are not loud enough to hear but she feels they are intended to unsettle her.

The question and answers are constantly interrupted by comments from the boys, loud laughter and chairs being scraped on the floors.

The teacher stops the class and attempts to deal with the offenders.

The immediate response from the Cool Dudes is verbally disrespectful to the teacher. Immediately this brings loud sniggers and congratulatory agreement delivered with great amusement from the group. This is what they came to see.

The teacher wishes to move one of the offenders,

“F*** off”, loudly spoken by Cool Dude#1.

For the audience, it is getting better. The teacher again verbally tries to enforce discipline by removing Cool Dude#1 and putting him outside the classroom but it is a failure and a request is sent to a member of the Administration team to come and remove this Cool Dude.

In the meantime, as the class waits and Cool Dude has an opportunity to linger in front of his reluctant audience, cementing his rank and dismissively sneering at the teacher.

All activity has come to a halt.

The hidden learning is happening and continues on.

In due course, this Dude is removed and the classroom begins to calm down. The teacher moves over to where these boys are sitting, knowing that she must begin by encouraging some manner of cooperation and peace if there is to be any “learning” going on today.

The teacher, now, actively works towards appeasing the noisy boys and, as their behaviours cause such an impact on the class, she sits with them, works with them and gives them all the assistance necessary so that the climate achieves a degree of balance. These boys feign a cooperative appearance, fraudulent to all within view but accepted as genuine so that the pretense might them see all through until the end of the lesson.

Meanwhile, the girls quietly go on with the required tasks.

Emily has very low literacy, but she has been seated with her friend who helps her with the tasks.

The teacher looks at Emily, frustrated that she must attend to the boys, as she must control them! A spotlight plays over the girls who look towards the teacher, hoping for some help. Some shrug as she continues on with the boys but they know she has to keep these boys in the room and reasonably quiet.

Finally the class is over and the teacher dismisses the students as the music announces the beginning of recess.

As they are leaving the class, one of the Cool Dudes puts his arm around the middle of the girl who spoke out and won't let her go.

Arrogantly he grins at her face and also at his boy sycophants who speculate as to what he might be wishing to do and when.

"Get out of it", she loudly objects to this but his band are calling encouragement and so he passes a comment referring to the size of her breasts then moves away and saunters proudly offstage.

The spotlight centers on the girl.

Target has been negated and closed down.

Behind, in the classroom, the teacher breathes a sigh of relief in that she has managed to get through another one of those lessons and there has been minimal fallout.

Tomorrow is another day.

Curtain.

Hysterical Reflection

What is happening here? Why are the boys calling out? Why the sniggers when the girl is trying to answer? Why do those boys feel they can swear at a teacher? What gives them the right to show such disrespect? Do they speak so rudely to everyone? Why are the girls quiet? Why aren't they revolting in regards to what the boys are doing? Why, when the girls are good, do the boys get all the attention for being naughty and disrespectful? Surely a good person gets rewarded? What happens to the girls if they want help? Do they just go on regardless and never learn how to do that particular problem? What is happening for the teacher?

Moments of a Scene

We forge a peculiar situation when we reward the negative and ignore the positive. Each moment of this scene is part of a whole scene. Each character reacts to previous events and, as such, is holding onto pre-conceived ideas of what is happening. As humans we can operate as a band, and to stand out from this band, a behaviour must be louder, more overt, than the other behaviours.

Dismantling the scene, I look at each moment. As I cast my eye over my recreation I see it with not just my physical Self, my eye, but also with my “I”. Students entering the classroom bring their morning story and actions of the previous night. His morning might have begun with a vicious comment from his father about what he is wearing. She might have fought with her brother. So many things happen in so many lives that it is impossible to be aware of all that students are bring into the classroom—their emotions and their physical being. A silence of morning events echoes around the class, bouncing off some surfaces and being absorbed into others. It is there and we cannot see it—just below the surface it lurks, shaping thoughts and actions. There discloses the White Noise Curriculum for this class.

In walk the protagonists.

A girl asks a question.

For the Cool Dudes, this is the moment of disconnection and a chance to display their legendary status.

To interrupt the flow of a lesson, to provide obstacles and to prevent others passing by those obstacles, causes a change. There is an interruption to expected events and with that change explodes onto the stage.

Climate Change

The classroom climate bursts into palpable heaviness as the Dudes enter. Characters all assume the required stance, their habitual stance. Many of the girls go into “good” mode. Some of the boys from outside the Boy Band, are hopeful of inclusion at a later date, and they absorb some of that volatile energy released by the Cool Dudes.

Who immediately sets up a ripple of noise for the new teacher? Who is most often “in the teacher’s face”? Boys want to be first. “Oh Miss? Aw Miss!” they say in loud and louder voices. Boys are first to move around and physically make contact with other boys, be it to wrestle or to punch another boy on the arm. I find that boys also are likely to make comments directed towards what is happening in the class. They also demand attention and are unable to wait their turn for attention. They display this by calling out and stridently commenting when not invited.

Boys compete for dominance and control in the classroom. Who are these boys?

I take my natural attitude and look upon what is happening in this classroom scene. I make no judgment. I look at this carefully as it is my re-creation. I see the boys taking their stance, the girl asking her question and feel the offense she has to confront after the lesson. Is there some kind of meaning here that I can grasp?

Concealed Curriculum

Why do the boys accept this offensive behaviour as being appropriate? I might try to understand what is appropriate for them but I dismiss that with a flick of my fingers— for me, their appropriate behaviour is what they are enacting. It is how they interpret required symbolic language and use it in classroom transactions where they assert the value of their masculine currency. They reflect the masculinity, which they

are playing out imitating fathers, brothers, celebrities, and footballers. I hear the loudness and the brashness of those who wish to be seen as important and central to the action. I hear the words of their models echoed, thrown into the mix, creating an aggressive warning to the world that these boys are not to be messed with because they are men, men of status.

Disbelief overtakes me. I stand back from my last sentence in my last paragraph and wonder whether this reality is actual. Do boys do this? This is what I see and I, as a member of society and a watcher of people, have seen the same behaviours and heard the same words in many different settings—malls, shops, football matches, swimming pools—and I have watched those boy social players receive the rewards that their stance confers upon them.

I watch others draw back so as not be noticed, and not be subjected to humiliation. There is so much power in the use of language. I recognise it as an enforcer of the Symbolic Order of patriarchy. I see girls punished by forms of language when they try to assert their Self.

As I write, I ponder over the reality that there are girls, too, who adopt “appropriate” behaviour. I find that they still do not affect the classroom climate as powerfully as boys. My attention as I teach seems constantly captured by boys. I am ever alert—what is going on, who is working and who is not, who is listening to the discussion and who is not?

In this classroom, I am seeing inequity manifested. I feel my Self slipping into a *laissez-faire* approach which provides an easier path. I allow some behaviour and enforce others. It is what teachers do and I am caught up with the Hidden Curriculum and what is it saying?

This Hidden Curriculum dare not admit that one gender receives greater access to resources—both human and physical. This Curriculum dare not admit that girls can be ignored because of their gender-based behaviours. I could never announce my reality that gender drives the climate and balance in a heterogeneous classroom. There is an inherent dishonesty in the culture of the Hidden Curriculum. As I name, apply language, to what is happening I confer a certain Symbolic reality to this room and all within it.

Scene Two

My second scene spotlights the teacher.

Setting

Split stage with one smaller portion on the left showing the staff room, the teacher hideout. There is a sink at one end of a bench, against the wall and a kettle sits on the bench, along with a jar of coffee and a carton of milk. Rather tired vinyl red chairs line the other wall and teacher begins this scene on one of those tired red chairs. There is a door in the partition that separates staff room from classroom.

The larger portion is a classroom in a public high school in Tasmania, which is rather non-descript and contains furniture of laminate tables and red plastic chairs. There are open windows in the wall. The slapping sound of basketballs and running feet can be heard. The layout of the room is conventional in that the tables are in rows and the chairs are placed directly behind them. There is a Public Address speaker high up on the wall at the front of the room above the whiteboard. The room seems to speak of impermanence, as there are no personal items of any kind here.

Characters

Teacher

Cool Dude#1

Cool Dude #2

Leia

Emily

Boy Band

Silent girls

The scene begins

The teacher sits, gladly cushioned by the empathy of her colleagues and hastily sipping that final caffeine shot that will surge into her system, heightening her physical Self as caffeine re-introduces itself to her morning start.

She has spent hours planning this, catering for all contingencies, preparing and thinking. She gathers her books and pens.

"One lesson? One hundred minutes of a lesson! I have spent hours planning this and I know what I can do if that happens and I know. I am prepared for anything."

Siren goes and she walks from staffroom to classroom. She knows what it will be like and no amount of preparation can save her.

"Oh, God... here we go! I so don't want to be in there but, no choice!"

That sinking feeling grasping for a permanent position in our stomach is hard. She knows who is going to be loud and who is going to be in her face for much of the time. She had this class yesterday. She walks into the classroom and looks around, mentally girding her loins. After so much time she thinks that she should have accomplished more but it seems to come down to just getting through.

It is almost as if a tiredness and a resignation have descended upon her. Not every day is like this, though, as some days there is energy sparking and firing, enthusing and energizing but her protagonists maintain similar faces and actions. Girls walk in, laughing and giggling amongst themselves.

"Hi Emily, Leia. Where to this weekend? Looking forward?"

She has a chat with them and smiles as they tell her about a silly incident that happened in another class. This quiet little dialogue is relaxing and quite satisfying. She is used to that interaction with girls. She likes this, as this is how she wants to be with them all. In come the boys.

Immediately, there is action and clamour. Her Cool Dude gang commandeers its usual

places and spaces, rejecting any other body that might approach its domain. She begins the settling down of the class but tries to avoid confronting the noises coming from the boys in the classroom.

When one of the girls responds to a question and receives an immediate loud response from the boys, she hesitates.

This continues and, after being told to "F*** off", she tries to remove Cool Dude #1. He digs in his heels and refuses to go.

"I'll go to the office, Miss."

One of the girls offers to get the senior teacher.

She knows she shouldn't do this but how else do you cope? She demands this of herself again about just how does she cope. She wants to teach and she wants to enjoy this. She has been told all the ways whereby behaviour management is successful. First rule is one warning, then another, then place the student apart from others, then if there is more refusal, relocate them to another room.

So easy does this sound that one might almost be reluctant to believe that it doesn't work. She knows it doesn't work. If a tall, brazen 15, on the verge of manhood boy does not wish to move then it becomes impossible.

Resort to outside help and let's get this problem removed.

She knows that Cool Dude #1 loves this attention; she knows that this is what he wants. This morning his status points will have shot up and he will be talked about in admiring tones as his level of leadership soars to a high. Not only is he flouting the authority of a teacher, he shows that smart girl what he thinks, he has shown his group that he has what it takes to make a stand and he has shown them how to do it properly! His removal from the classroom brings a breath of relief to her.

It is now when she again questions herself as she stands downstage.

"Why did I do that? I know what it means for him. He gets Brownie points from his

mates and he made me look stupid. Just got to get on with it. Forget it.”

How to maintain this façade of peace and satisfaction? How can she make it so that a new leader does not rise up in the place of Cool Dude#1 and take his place? She glances at the desks in front of the Boy Band and notices the lack of paper and writing things. So she moves to sit with the boys and to help them through the rest of the lesson, knowing that she is doing a disservice to the girls who just get on with the work.

What would it be like if she could teach as she dreams of doing?

Why can't the boys just back off?

She knows she has to find another way of dealing with this, as she is not focusing on learning but on behaviour management. And the boys nudge each other as she places the paper on the desk and hands them a pen. This nudging ceases and they loudly demand help.

She turns away when one of the girls asks for help but is forced to quickly return to the Boy Band as they persist in keeping her attention.

Reflections

Who is this teacher? What is she doing? Why does she behave this way?

Does this align with socialisation processes that happen in our schools? What is it that each protagonist is learning about what is required if they are to fit into existing social orders? What are some boys learning about their status as boys?

I see demands being made upon the whole audience, not just our teacher. All students who are within that classroom are being exposed to this scene and thus, as we are human, we begin to make our own meaning of what might be happening. There is an old proverb that I remember from my school days—the squeaking wheel gets the oil.

Socialisation

Cool Dude #1 gets the oil. He gets the attention, even if he is finally to be removed but all who are within this room see that there is no power for our female teacher—she is unable to bring him undone. All his audience sees just which operations he uses to attain this measure of power. His refusal to move, his swearing at her, his laughter at the girl asking the question and thus his denigration of her inquiry—he has the power to do the same to every other person in the room and what can they do if the teacher fails and has no power. Is this a declaration of masculine assertion or aggression?

Do girls learn the same thing? I believe that girls learn what not to do. Their only female model is the teacher. Girls who asked questions discover that intimidation is likely if they appear to be, maybe, smarter and thus, on their way to gaining power. A girl also learns that her body is available for rejection and ridicule. Such powerful intimidation in an adolescent female has huge implications that cause her to keep her own counsel. She learns that her mind, although it might be powerful, is not to be used in situations whereby she can be destroyed by comments on her body. Her insecurity about her body means that she can allow someone else to be definitive about how it appears to others. She can be shut down. Her female peers learn the same lesson—if you speak out we will disclose information about your undesirability and your tangible Self. She asks herself, “Che Vuoi? What do you want of me?” Masculine voices and actions clearly show her and she is left in little doubt that her socially desired status is lower, her social value is less and she learns appropriate behaviours for future unknown events.

The intended formal curriculum is on hold. The hidden socialising curriculum is being played out as *white noise* wafts through the classroom.

The Imperative to Teach

I cannot ignore the teacher. My intention is not to place ridicule on her either as she is operating in a situation where she can be unaware of some currents that colour the atmosphere of her classroom and she is also a product of her own socialisation as a gendered human being.

A good teacher is courageous (Palmer, 1998). Good teaching comes from moral integrity and being of a teacher. Developing an identity, being honest with that identity, and retaining morality and ethics in this process require great veracity.

My experience as a teacher has taught me that I would never really understand my impact for many years. It is now that I receive thanks from students from ten years past that I begin to understand my influence. A teacher cares about the people they teach. The teacher is a guide and a mentor. A teacher is able to encourage change and provide the mechanisms for this to occur. A teacher opens doors for her students and encourages possibilities. Primarily, a teacher has an innate capacity to teach because that educator is learning all their life and thus is understanding of the gifts that culture can convey.

Cool Dude's Historicity

The protagonists of my play were once in Grade Seven.

My play is situated in the halls of the Grade Ten area at the public high school. Were I to go beyond the halls of the Grade Ten Area and step into the Grade Seven area, my senses would be assaulted. I recognise that this type of chaotic *ethos* from

which my protagonists emerged has cast its influence upon their current ways of being in Grade Ten. If I were to film the images and sounds playing in the show around me I could show you stark terrifying shots of rude, swearing students, pushing over desks and throwing chairs, students refusing to work at all and abusing others in the classroom and even abusing teachers. It would be male students who would dart in and out of classrooms and run up the corridor. In the background you would see a couple of boys, relatively cooperative and some learning seems to occur. Some students might be able to feel a measure of success and there are pockets of safety. As I pan my camera, you would spy totally disengaged boys, boys bullying and setting the chaotic tone of the whole area. As narrator of my documentary I would highlight these images show that imply an imbalance of strength—I would assert the salient feature of a definition of bullying as negative actions that are repeated and carried out over time (Stein, 2002, p. 410). As my panning continues, boys rush in and out of the classrooms, past the teachers, and they continue harassing girls. I pan again to see what was happening for girls.

Scene Three

Setting

A classroom in a public high school in Tasmania, which is rather non-descript and contains furniture of laminate tables and red plastic chairs. There are windows on the wall, overlooking the basketball courts. The layout of the room is conventional in that the tables are in rows and the chairs are placed directly behind them. There is a Public Address speaker high up on the wall at the front of the room above the whiteboard. The room seems to speak of impermanence, as there are no personal items of any kind here.

Characters

Teacher

Cool Dude#

Cool Dude #2

Leia

Emily

Boy Band

Silent girls

The play begins with the spotlight hovering first on Leia and then on Emily.

Leia and Emily are sick of what is going on. Every time they have class, they know what is going to happen. They know how they will feel.

The trouble is, though, that they don't actually know how to change things. The boys get noisy and they think they are really funny but really they just look stupid but who is going to say that.

Sometimes one of the girls stands up to the boys and tells them to shut up but usually it is way too humiliating because they know what will happen. There will be a comment or a joke about their bodies and it is always cruel. Someone will say they are fat or have big boobs.

That is so not good. That is awful.

The girls know how they look when that happens and they know it is easier to be quiet and just get on with whatever they are doing.

The shame!

It happens to one of their friends today as she tries to find out some information about what the teacher is talking about.

As soon as she begins to talk, they can hear the words "Tits, mouth" but can't make out the words in between.

They can imagine though and judging from the smirks on the Boy Band faces, it is some disgusting remark.

Their friend is embarrassed into silence and she stops asking. Leia and Emily watch as the boys laugh and joke at the expense of their friend.

Why isn't their teacher doing anything about this?

Why is she just ignoring what was right in front of her?

Those boys have it all. Then, if they want something, they get it by being nice and so on, but they sometimes are cruel and threaten to say things in class about you.

It is these threats that they hate.

One day someone tells the teacher but is told to ignore the boys.

Ignore the boys?

How can you when they are there, all the time and they are in the playground at recess and lunch? They can continue the denigration for as long as it takes for them to achieve their aim.

Why should they be quiet?

Why can't they speak out?

Didn't they have the same rights?

Why does one person want to be so unkind to another?

What is happening?

Why are they afraid to speak out and refuse to be intimidated?

Why isn't their teacher helping them?

Reflections

I see many of the girls take a silent approach, and, knowing that the teacher is focused on the boys' behaviour, they secrete themselves away in the corner. By doing this, they fail to gain as much attention as would be possible to make a difference for them. There is a minimum amount of work done, and minimal discussion undertaken, as the teacher needs all eyes on the boys.

So how can girls benefit? What message are they getting?

I see girls, in classes, from a very young age and the hidden messages from teachers and students are that what boys say and do seems to be most important—what girls want or need take a back seat to boys' needs. The Hidden Curriculum re-enforces the passivity of girls. In the classroom of the Hidden Curriculum, the girls learn that what they want is not as important as what the boys want. Boys want attention and want to show who is the “alpha” person in the room, the one who sets the conditions and hidden agendas. Boys do this through confrontation with other students and with teachers, showing that they can and will take on opposing forces.

Becoming a Subject

I have an understanding that an idea of boys and girls, males and females, women and men is such that as soon as a word, a symbolic application is applied to a subject, who exists in the Real, it might become lost as a Self determining subject. As Žižek says, it becomes interpretively pre-determined through being constructed by the Symbolic Order (in Myers, 2003, p. 19). Girls lose their subjectification and become socialised, subjectivised, as part of the existing order.

Suppose a Self who is designed by the Symbolic Order's signifiers of appeasement and placation is rewarded and promoted? Suppose this Self is placed in society, in the beginning socialisation room of the school. What might this Self be like? I suggest that there might be a “type” and I might even call this a stereotype for an acceptable Self. This type of Self might be compliant and amiable, never loud and brash nor demanding and assertive. It acts in the ways, which are deemed suitable for such a Self to be and does not step outside of those boundaries. Those to whom the

Self must defer define this Self. If this Self acts outside of a regulated, required and promoted ways of being, outside of the required order, then the Self might find it necessary to curb their actions and behaviours through various methods—legal, political, economical, social and emotional. The method of enforcement is designed to be what the Symbolic Order, in its arbitrary mode, determines to be most “effective and efficient”. The Big Other, definer of parameters and legalities, the arbiter of social and cultural orders and promoter of the Symbolic Order, a patriarchy of rules, becomes inexorably active.

Can I be confident and creative now? Can I place these very behaviours back in the classroom where the sexual comments on a girl’s breasts or body has the same desired outcome? Can I say that to negate and denigrate a girl’s point of view is a means to make sure that she understands her social position and her lack of power?

Boys in Motion

My observations are such that gauche adolescence possesses boys. They are the ones who will push chairs and desks. They throw things around the room. They move through the room and everything falls over and things fall off shelves! Loud aggressive behaviour possesses them and their actions. Boys’ movements tend to be bigger as they use their hands and their arms to swing around, to push and to manipulate. There are those who say that the attention span of boys is less than girls as they find it hard to sit still for long. It would not be hard to believe that. Restless boys need to be physically interacting with their environment, to be pushing and shoving each other rather than watching. They fidget constantly—taking things apart without learning how to put them back together. Their unease and restlessness is embodied in their adolescent Self.

Few girls do this. Girls are more likely to gather in groups and develop their relationships in the gathering. Girls do not seem to use large motor movements. They do not seem to have a desire to shove and push and take up the larger space. Girls develop their verbal capacity as they form groups using negotiation skills, and as they develop an idea or discuss a topic. I like to think of girls building up a defence army, the Resistance forces who are dedicated to Guerrilla tactics of secrecy and non-compliance—I digress into my world of possibilities!

There are obvious differences that I find amongst pubescent males and females. At this stage, boys are becoming men and girls are becoming women. The upsurge in sex hormones sees bodily changes that can sometimes be difficult to accept. Body shapes change and sexuality becomes a reality. I do not wish to provide a full discussion of such transformations, as that is not within the scope of my thesis yet I do believe that this change process is essential to becoming adults. Although this is not within my scope, I believe that coming to understand what boys do to be men and what girls do to be women might provide scope for another thesis which has guiding questions that might ascertain the effect of behaviours and activities of boys and girls in the classroom and those from outside of the classroom.

Imaginary to Symbolic

Let me take you into the world of Zizek (in Myer, 2003,p.12). There is a stage in the infant's life that he calls the "mirror stage". The infant's body, in the throes of a profound alienation as it struggles to master its fragmented and uncoordinated Self, forms a pleasurable identification with an image that, like a reflection in a mirror, offers a sense of recognition and Self-belonging, a sense of Self.

It is here that a process of development might begin for girls and boys as they search for an identity that they can cast upon their ego, one that flatters and sits well and one that attaches to them. Into the mirror of advertised ways of being, desirable ways of being, valued ways of being, she gazes, silently formulating and absorbing the ways by which a girl might become valuable within a community. She watches and might be rewarded for some activity or behaviour or look. Hence her sense of recognition and Self become a pleasurable kind of identification.

Zizek refers to this sense of recognition as the Imaginary, that begins with a special narcissism but becomes intertwined with immersion into the Symbolic through language, a primary symbolic medium. This Symbolic Order sets linguistic and cultural signs, a chain of signification that makes sense of the world and our position within it (Sheehan, 2012, p 12).

Michelle Fine, in her book, *Sexuality, Schooling and Adolescent Females* (2002, p. 382) discusses trials of girls as they become women. From where do their ideas come? Is it nature or nurture? She discusses how she believes female adolescents come to understand their sexuality and she suggests that there is little Self-reflection. A girl's information comes from outside of her—peers, culture, gender relations of power, authority, religion and history, notably those I have discussed in previous chapters relating to acts of subordinating females in our society.

Boys to Men

So where do boys learn how to be men? Does it just happen? I suggest that boys experience similar turmoil and confusion as females and similar forces outside of themselves inform their developing sexuality.

There is a very unequal playing field where boys and girls perform. Whereas, I often see young women in an inferior social position powered by sexuality. Young men assume, perhaps without knowing it, a socially supported stronger position, which informs many of their behaviours with and around girls. Power based sexuality denotes the inequity between two people in relation to their sexuality—one has the power to intimidate or control another through a variety of strategies. I acknowledge that there are young men who have no wish to be part of a masculine hegemony that exists in parts of society where they walk. Exploration of this phenomenon would also require another thesis.

In my initial paragraphs of this section, I refer to behaviours that appear to be inherently male. Barry Thorne speaks of male behaviours in his book, *Do Boys and Girls Have Different Cultures?* Anthropologists, he says, (2002, p. 134) propose the idea that much of what boys do can be related back to their survival techniques in antiquity—roaming in bands and hunting, having strict hierarchies—recall the Boy Band—for the survival of the band and the hunters. They explain much of this in terms of the idea that the group has greater power than an individual and the effect of any action chosen must be more powerful. In society and in the classroom, I observe this being acted out as loud and sometimes abusive behaviour by the popular leader(s) who set the tone that they wish for the environment they promote and desire. Recall the Cool Dudes and the Boy Band.

Remove that person from the classroom and the whole atmosphere changes.

Spotlighting Girls

What might it be like for girls if they all stand as the centre of attention? What might it be like for them if they find that they are the most important people in a room?

How can being at the centre of attention possibly make a difference to their learning and to their socialisation? What might it be like to know that the way a girl learns is trustworthy and valid? How might it feel for a girl to discuss a thought or an idea and to have it recognised as credible? What possible futures might open for her?

I recall the possibility of an all-girls class and *Just Us Girls*. The all-girls class provided girls with a chance to operate as females whose subjectification is recognised and celebrated.

Intermission

I want to pause a moment in my drama for some respite from the constant knocking of adolescence and take a chance to consider what has been shown if I look beyond the phenomenology of the experience. I re-visit the dramatic techniques and purposes of drama and I might understand more deeply.

Throughout the scenes there are specific moments, certain selected words and spotlighted characters. I do this to draw my audience into the significance of the language used and the actions happening within the framework of my stage of a classroom. For each event that has been identified, each action that has occurred and each part of the dialogue there has been given a signifier, a sign. The sign might be in the movement of an actor as they stand or, in the case of the Cool Dudes, sit and spread their bodies out. Perhaps I might consider this to be a sign of arrogance. I might see an over-confidence in this situation and might extend that sign, signifier, into a chain of meaning whereby I begin to make sense of what is happening.

I wonder if discussion of both phenomenology and semiotics is appropriate here. Phenomenology does not bind me with boundaries of thought. The manifolds of meaning do not have to be coerced into position and carefully dissected in light of fixed

knowledge. Semiotics, as a term applied to the ways in which meaning is made and exchanged in society (Shephard & Wallis, 2004, p. 236) appears to be a more structured process. I am inquiring into the Symbolic Order, and as I am trying to make meaning of the signs that are given. This means I address semiotics. I study the signs and the ways that they are being presented as ways to distinguish how the dominating actions of the Cool Dudes are played out—within a set process of sign presentation. Semiotics is not at the centre of my thesis even though it is an alternative player in the understanding of dramatic action.

Act Two

Setting

A classroom in a public high school in Tasmania, which is rather non-descript and contains furniture of laminate tables and red plastic chairs. There are windows on the wall, overlooking the basketball courts. The layout of the room is conventional in that the tables are in rows and the chairs are placed directly behind them. There is a Public Address speaker high up on the wall at the front of the room above the whiteboard. The room seems to speak of impermanence, as there are no personal items of any kind here.

Character

Teacher

Scene One

The teacher is centre stage in an empty classroom.

I have had enough. It is just an impossible task to let those girls work without having to put up with all the boys stuff – stuff?

The noise, the comments, the rudeness, the denigration. How much can any person take? I am so sick of hearing the words and watching the faces.

I know what people will say. I know that others will think that I should be doing more. All right, if I see something then why am I not stopping it? Well, yes, why am I not stopping it? I

don't like being confronted. I know what it will be like if I really step up. Sometimes, too, it is so, so subtle and I just can't actually say what it is that is happening but I do know that it is not right.

Yes, it is happening and it doesn't matter who knows. Yes, the money had been put into boys' education so there was a boys' class that was being held up as the saviour of all boys at the school. Fine. That is all well and good but what about the girls? It is all very well to have countless dollars put into keeping that lot of boys out of everyone's hair but there is still a whole lot of girls who have to stay in with the boys whether they like it or not. What hope have they got? Where does that leave them? It doesn't seem fair and I know that the girls need a chance and I know that it would make a difference if they had the same kind of opportunity.

I wonder if they know how it feels when you walk into a room, and just know what it will be like. I wonder if others see the same things that I see. I know it is not always like this in every class. I will say, though, that some are really overt while others, I just see little things happening and then I watch the girls. And I hear others talking. Which girls get the praise? So often they get praised because they are quiet. I read compliant! I read passive. Even as I read this, I am not trying to say that there should be much more noise from the girls but I do think that there could be a bit more encouragement for the girls to speak out, confidently. I do think that when they do speak out that the boys are made to be quiet and respectful. I dream! Indeed I do dream but I must dream a bit. There has to be a movement forward and I can't just sit around doing nothing.

Thus she thinks and speaks.

I have had enough of walking into rooms and seeing what is going on. I guess it is an element of powerlessness. And, I also see, that while the girls are muted and silenced and the boys become louder, then it would be them who got the oil, the funding. There seems an element of inequality about this. I do try to look at this picture in an equal way—if the boys are disturbing then they must need more help. That would be the expected way of

considering what was happening. Yes, I know. That is what a great teacher would think but I do not feel great and I don't feel like caring either. If that is the case, does it also mean that just because the girls are silenced that they have no needs?

If a properly cynical view is taken, I might even believe that this is what always happens. It is a bit like building all those Training Colleges where boys can learn a trade and a skill and keep out of the ordinary high school! It is better not to think along those lines and just to focus on making a difference for girls.

Yes I am sick of it. Yes, I want to see some positive growth and development and the lack of power within my hands means this is seemingly impossible.

Research becomes the necessary road to consideration and success. What do people do in this situation?

This self-addressed speech conveys the notion that the teacher is at war with herself. Her soliloquy predicts her intention. Where one thing occurs there might be something that she isn't quite seeing or she is deluding herself. This dramatisation of self-division heightens the turmoil within the teacher. It helps her to draw away from a level of Self-centeredness. She has put these thoughts out there. My reader, you are seeing her words and maybe you are even thinking along with her. If I should change this into a soliloquy of audience participation, she might even invite comment from all and be conversing with the audience.

I take her thoughts and translate them into a future. I know where she is heading with her ideas and thus, I can inform you of her direction. I invite my readers to recall her words. Are they familiar? Might we all have spoken them at different times, seeking personal direction and salvation? Her disclosure is powerful in the construction of her identity. She is letting us listen to her words but she is not directing them at us. Might she not become quiet if she knows others are listening? I

think not. It is this very art of a Self addressed soliloquy that involves us in her life; she is carrying us with her and she is encouraging us all to make her acquaintance. From this, we might begin to understand her temporal and spatially situated Self.

I do have an idea that an all-girls class in Grade Eight will allow these young women to gradually gain confidence and belief in themselves and their own sex. I feel that, as an experienced teacher, I understand the adolescent psyche (as best as anyone can) and could develop a needs-based programme in consultation with other students and staff so that it would be a much more focused approach to female learning. This won't be easy, as many people in education seem to delight in saying that girls were doing much better than boys. All one has to do was check out the literacy scores on NAPLAN—the federally based literacy standardised literacy testing.

Research and thought, thinking and planning are becoming part of her day.

My reading and searching just leads me into this direction because this seems to be the way that most people are thinking. So I look at NAPLAN standardised testing that is carried out on all Grades Three, Seven and Nine students in Australia.

It seems that educators and bureaucrats alike assume the stance that girls are doing really well. Wait on, Grade Three testing? But girls always are better at that stage and they tend to read more and do quieter stuff! Boys are out there kicking footballs, not reading! Then, I find the ideas that get told about how there are more girls in Grade Twelve doing well than there are boys. I find that the statistics actually say that more boys left for jobs in Grade Eleven and the girls are busy doing humanities not necessarily Sciences and Maths. Reading careers and jobs information,”

She thinks that the best paying jobs are in Sciences and Maths and Technology.

So what is happening for the girls? I know there hasn't been dedicated research by me but I know that my feeling is right. This is what I see and hear. Why am I reading, in the papers, that women are still paid less than men? Why am I reading that there are more

single mothers in poverty than single fathers? Why there are so many women in part-time work? Why? Why? Too many questions for me to focus on right now but what if there was a way to help these girls in this school? Why are we just talking about NAPLAN testing? Why aren't we talking about education and human beings and developing the subject, as the girl? Why is there this focus on literacy and numeracy, a test given on one day of the year and being used as a profile for viewing girls' education as successful? Are we not even thinking about what it means to educate?

She thinks and reads. How does she get to this place? I would like to stand back from our teacher and see her contextually in a classroom, as a qualified teacher with a Degree. Understanding begins with looking at the composite parts of a scene.

She is there, our teacher and it is she who is thinking and pondering. It is she who is considering and it is she who is embodying the proactive approach to gender inequity. Is she real? Is she perhaps self-delusional? To know our teacher, it is necessary that we see a convergence of disclosure and enactment—a person will emerge as we follow the temporal experience of our teacher within this environment.

I am reading and writing my thoughts—how did I get to this stage? What stage am I at? I recall my originally intended metaphorical movement through one floor level to another. My narrative began on the first floor and steps up to look at a Self who grew to question the methods that used to provide a “good education” and what happens to girls. Another step and the reflexive Self finds herself in a state of learning about her story. Another step and the actions that follow cause her to move through another stairwell—a ladder, with rungs.

Scene Two

Setting

Teachers' staffroom. There is a sink at one end of a bench, against the wall and a kettle sits on the bench, along with a jar of coffee and a carton of milk. Rather tired vinyl chairs line the other wall and teacher begins this scene on one of those chairs.

Character

Teacher: 48 years old, appears harassed but determined. She is blonde and of solid build.

A Teacher's Soliloquy

I don't really want to teach a Grade Eight Class. Grade Eight is a challenge not only to the teacher but also to the adolescent. The hormones are activated and the physical Self is open for anything. Thought confusion is rampant and questions are randomly chaotic as are behaviours.

This very confusion provides an opportunity to make meaning and to construct meaning. If one is to believe the biblical thought that out of chaos came order—the very concepts upon which the Big Bang Theory operated as well—then it makes sense to begin here and to encourage an evolution of the female into an empowered and confident being—optimistic, resilient and future minded. I think that is a bit hopeful though.

Whilst the Big Bang Theory concentrates upon the eons of time needed for planetary and cosmic motion to become more orderly, I am focusing on changing the world in twelve months. I find the allegorical alignment of adolescence to the Big Bang to be appropriate. This is good. This is what it is like.

Just imagine the rampant neural activity within the girl brain, the surging chemicals impacting upon every aspect of physiology and the possible explosions caused by this battle, then you begin to have some very tiny idea about the power of the matter detonation that threw the universe into the ether. The unimaginable forces then caused all energy to become matter, which was then hurled away, only to be gradually drawn together as the laws of physics constructed the universe and its cosmic bodies. Why should it not be that the laws of nature too, could embrace Adolescent Chaos? Biology? And that a solid, confident Self could emerge from the frenzied origins. Deification is not my

requirement, nor do I align myself with any particularly goddess-like form but I believe that as a mature and experienced woman and teacher, I have insight into processes that will enable this to happen. I have been there before and even if I don't understand all of it, I can find some areas of common ground.

How do girls find their value? Through large breasts? Through skinny bodies? Through face painting? Where are their minds in all this? Where do we see the powerful women? Where do we see women of any age succeeding because of who she is not what she looks like? You and I know it happens but we are not presented with images and in a world where we rely on the visualising of ideas and values, these women are absent.

Can I tell a girl she is worthwhile? Can I build in her a resilience to resist the imposition of false images? Can I show her that her skills and her talents will be her life and her mainstay? Can I build her strength so that she can move into the adult world as a confident human being? Can I show her that she is equal to any man and that it is only that gender-based differences are to be celebrated not denigrated?

Can I encourage and support her to find a future that is not dependent upon external approval? Can I show her that she can have a future whereby she can be an independent thinking woman, confident of her own abilities and able to have a child and be an educator of that child? What skills do I need and what would this support and encouragement look like?

Do I structure a new curriculum? Maybe I need to examine what the curriculum is and affirm my thoughts that the curriculum is indeed male-oriented.

Do I have little talkfests where we can discuss problems and issues that arise in their everyday life?

Do I gather together a band of like-minded women and storm the social bastions demanding that women and girls be treated better?

Do I find someone who has been there before and use their information?

Do I place posters around the school, letting girls know that they can operate a

computer just as well as any boy?

Do I talk often to my classes about this issue and demand some respect for the girls?

I don't think so. This has all been done

I need to be able to immerse girls in a learning programme, which is dedicated to their learning styles and their femaleness. I need to be able to undertake compulsive and profound Self-exploration to understand my reasons and my real talents. I need to be able to have other women, strong young role models, showing the girls the possibilities and I need to build their image within the school—let others see that they were people, not just flitting images in a male world.

But how can this be done? As an educator, I am at the mercy of the education system and institutions. I have little say and certainly no money! Within the education system it is difficult to operate in isolation and when one does, there is not the financial or human network to support innovative programmes.

So I will be the first drop in the ocean.

Here we witness the maturing teacher. She considers her options and draws our empathy. She is situated in a land where there are not meant to be recognisable issues with girls in education. Nobody talks of the notion of female teacher and education's influence on socialisation. No one understands or reflects upon our notions of good education. No one seems to care that there is little concern for students who seem to be viewed as a large mono dimensional group, a standardised group. Caring is reserved for behavioural issues or for someone who is a great sportsman. There is given impossible sets of measurable outcomes for all her students and these are dictated from the halls of a public high school, sets of academic skills and sets of team building skills. Students are to learn prescribed knowledge in all major learning areas, assessed at pre-ordered times.

But she wonders if they will be autonomous and individual. She wonders if they will become a subject filled with symbols that condemn them to defined social classes and orders. How might we as teachers emancipate them and help them to emancipate themselves?

Between acts in my play, events roll on.

Parents are consulted as to whether they want a boys' class and a girls' class. School surveys are sent out and the results show that this is indeed a popular and supported idea. Parents recognise that their girls, because they are shy and lacking in confidence, have often been overlooked and ignored while boys and their behaviours grab the teacher's attention—Boys Rule! These girls are constantly under the radar and it is difficult to really measure their progress because, as long as they are not disturbing the class, the status quo is maintained. Not all the parents are in the same boat. Some feel that those girls who are already doing well will only do better in my class that is to be focused on female learning and development. Parents are surveyed as to whether they wish their daughter to be part of this. Eighteen parents respond positively—they want to give their daughters a better start and greater opportunities. In 2006, at the end of the year the school agrees to run an all-girls class in Grade Eight at the Tasmanian Public High School with the teacher in my play.

Act Three

The next act begins and the teacher reflects on what has happened from the beginning of the year.

Setting

Classroom that overlooks a small courtyard that opens onto a larger area. The classroom has two large beanbags in one corner, where there are two bookshelves containing a variety of books. The desks are arranged in a square with a large area in the centre being open. A teacher's desk is at the back of the room. The walls are decorated with colourful hessian and covered in various types of displays. It seems that the whiteboard is not the main focus of the room as desks are not angled towards it.

Character

Teacher: 49 years old, blonde and less harassed than in the previous scenes.

Scene One

The average age of the girls is 13, with all turning 14 in 2007. Most of the girls had been born in Tasmania and have been at local primary schools for their school lives. As a result many of them have spent a lot of time together. In regard to 2006, they have all been at Parklands for their Grade Seven but have been in a range of classes.

Literacy range is from students being in the top standard (86%), the highest, to several who operate at a Standard 2 level. This is also true of numeracy but many of the girls express hopelessness at Maths. I do not hear the same comments about literacy, even if their numeracy and literacy levels are of similar levels. That is what I find strange—the discrepancy between the liking of Maths and the liking of English. Calling these subjects literacy and numeracy rather than Maths and English does not sit well with me and I am uncomfortable doing as such.

Many of the students have siblings who were currently at school or have just left.

I might add, at this stage that there are factions amongst the girls. These factions are causing a few issues in the first few weeks. The factions are a left over from the previous year and need to be attended to immediately. Within the group, are several fairly powerful young women who have had the advantage in 2006, of being the ones acting out in ways that would get them attention from the boys. This meant swearing, temper tantrums and screaming. They also happily indulge in bullying those who did not behave in similar ways. This bullying takes the form of various taunts and some physical aggression as

well—punching and fighting. Often, the underhandedness is difficult to actually spot but the victim usually comes out with what is going on. That is a huge relief for me, as teacher. One of the things that I strongly believe in is the development of trust within the relationship of student and teacher. Therefore, by seeing this happen, by having girls confide in me, only supports my ideas regarding the importance of this and developing trust in relationships.

There is no more to say. I now start my own journey into reflection.

Curtain

There my play ends and the drama leads towards its own future.

Final Chapter: A Stone has been Cast

I am at another place now. I see where I am but I do not just look at my physicality of body in a space, in a time. I have come through. My stone is cast into a pond. Immediately a disturbance happens. The surface is broken. That which is visible and calm, which is dark yet sparkling is broken by a thought, a disruption. My disruption is not for me alone. This interruption sets up waves, particles moving up and down, longitudinal and transverse. From the pebble, every molecule in my pond reacts in some way, becomes reactionary. From my casting of a stone, each reader's mind should be disrupted and reacting now to my words. Have I provided you with a freedom to think without the strictures of a philosophical Symbolic order? I interrupt your life, for a moment, but, like my drama, it is a chance to think upon the phenomena I have presented to you.

The pond, as the Symbolic Order, is powerful and all-encompassing. Its strength is such that an agent of truth might be overwhelmed and helpless in the face of its supremacy. I confess that I did feel powerless. I felt silenced and passive as I felt I could never change anything and this is how things would be. My hysteria of serious, considered questioning is my weapon of incitement, a stone in the pond of the Symbolic Order. It is the only weapon I have to begin to dissolve the forces of the Symbolic Order. I have no preconceived notion of how you should be or what

you should think and do. I offer you an emancipatory step that is not done in the Socratic way, which would be a designing of my questions to produce a definite outcome (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 138). I cast my stone into the pond and ripples start.

Such is it with a thought, an idea. Something happens and it catches, it ripples, it sparks and it is. Nothing happens in isolation and if it does, I will never know. Therefore for me to give language to something, to bring it into this world, I must stand in relation to it in some way thus it is not isolated. From this phenomenon, flow effects onto other objects and things; people and entities. So it was with watching events unfold for girl students in a public high school.

I saw it happen.

I am dative of this thing, which is shown to me. With my eyes I see it and I cannot leave it just sitting there—like a freeze frame in my life. I cannot retain an image of this event and pose no other thought towards it. I cannot leave it as an image on a retina, frozen for all time. It creeps along a neural pathway, to my brain, my processor, my centre, my being and I.

Immediately I change, as with new knowledge I cannot be the same again since this thing has been made manifest to me. It is inserted into my life now and I must know what it means, and begin to understand it. I see the change wrought within my Self and my ways. Questioning and casting my stone has brought a deeper understanding of myself as a human being and a greater companionship with my moral integrity as this was ingredient to my thesis.

As an educator and as a person who believes that our life stories all build a dynamic humanity, changing and moving but never static, I have a responsibility to contribute to that dynamism. I am doing this by writing, thinking and sharing.

School is an institution of a society where, fundamental to its purpose, are the notions of socialisation for a society. School, as a large cumbersome thing, a place, a conception of education does not move fast. It lingers in places where stability is ensured and successes can be measured and accounted for. It sits in one place while time moves on. Its architecture is purposeful and stable, designed to house students and teachers in certain ways, in planned ways, in purposeful ways and it might be incumbent upon those who inhabit this space, to comply with the purposeful structures in carefully designed ways so that quantifiable success will happen. Red chairs are a mindful metaphor within the *mis en scene* of a school.

Society is changing and schools are slow. Reflection upon society has interrupted some traditional cultural mores yet given others a chance to make meaning of what has happened and allowed for an intermission to consider change.

Society is moving but processes into schools take too long. Education is persistent and continual. It doesn't stop. I would like to interrupt education, place it on a stage framework and begin to understand the intensity of intention in the placement of props and objects.

Education remains in schools where it can be watched and measured where the only interruption is for a discussion of NAPLAN testing, considered providing a valuable temporal space for further operations.

So a stone is thrown into a pond and a ripple begins. Outward it travels, disturbing and changing; its molecules and parts look dissimilar from different angles.

This is the first of many stones to be thrown.

Change happens.

Meanwhile, for the person to whom this has been given, it becomes essential to delve into this phenomenon, to unlock hidden secrets, to establish veracity, to be poet of narrative; and I do.

Van Manen (1990, p. 77) speaks of essence and essence of a phenomenon as being proffered to others as a direct association with an experience. It cannot be one-dimensional but I show as many sides as appear to me. I write of educational experiences and I see as many manifolds as is possible. I open them to you and serve them to you from my hands, with my Self and with my essence. Can I do this in any other way? Can I do this in such a way that we will have identical sight of the manifolds, the partitions? Can I do this as a whole view?

Cast back to when the Mommy sees the mountain (Myers, 2003, p. 25). She sees the mountain as it is, just there with no name and with no intentionality. It is present and she sees the mountain as it is, in the Real and it is immediate. I offer others to see this frame but I cannot keep it in the Real. I want to understand this thing that has been given to me and I let it sit, a moment in limbo, in a Void, then I bring it into the world in a way that I wish it to be seen. I give it language and syntax. I write the layers and the narratives that are given. I seek meaning. I seek a meaning that will allow me to come to some understanding of as many parts as I am able to. I choose the symbols I attach to this phenomenon. I choose which sides I alert you to as I build my narrative of meaning. I choose to give you exposure to an all-girls class so that you might wonder as to its existence. I do not wish to alert you to this initial

presentation as it is forewarning and with that might come some imaginings and pre-emptive symbolic attachments. I want you to see first.

I choose, then, to construct meaning. I take the whole as I first see it—a woman in society then I bring her into the sphere of education as a frame working stage for curriculum. My *dramatis personae* of female teacher Self recreates the manifolds of educational experience in a space, a space that sparks a thought which fires possibilities.

I wonder what you might do. What manifolds might open? How might others approach what I see? I weave my tapestry of a phenomenon with threads of words syntactically woven into meaning.

I stand then as the one who speaks of this as truth but it cannot be complete. It is a temporal truth that I find in moments in space. It is one that I am reflecting upon even now and growing my understanding. An object is just an object, even its symbols do not always remain static. When I look at what I know as a table, I understand a table as it is, with its manifolds that I am aware of. When I gaze at a red chair in a classroom, I see associations and stories, not just a plastic chair. It is true for me at the time I tell you of and it is my truth. You might accept what I say as a proposition about how an object is but with consideration and reflection you might find another meaning and your own truth of what an object or an event might be.

When another gaze passes over my event, my narrative, it is seen from another angle and with other eyes. This makes for diversity of responses to happenings as new manifolds reveal themselves to different eyes.

An idea cast into a pond, a voice of a unique being, sets up a ripple of newness, of thinking, and thus, from a new body in another space, at another time a new

relationship begins with the disclosures of educational experiences within the Symbolic Orders. With voice I weave my text and sing the threads of woman songs in the Symbolic Order of education.

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